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INDIAN LYRICS.

INDIAN LYRICS.

BY

W. TREGO WEBB,

BENGAL EDUCATION SERVICE.

iam singulorum fatigatio quamlibet se rudi modulatione solatur.

QUINTILIAN.

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TO MY SISTER.

*As one, who finds a gem of worth unknown
Keeps not his joy in his own breast confined,
But calls his neighbours with exulting mind,
That they with him may praise the priceless
So, with thee mine, I would not be alone
In m^y delight, but seek some means to find,
That others, now to so much sweetness blind,
May learn how rich a prize I call my own.
Hence am I bold from this far Indian clime
To send this page across the land and sea,
With thy fair name inscribed in happy time ;
And with a kind of proud humility
I gather up these scattered flowers of rime
And weave a wreath not for myself but thee.*

P R E F A C E.

A part of the series of Sonnets on our Indian Servants contained in this volume were contributed several years ago to the pages of *The Indian Observer*, and a few other pieces have since been published elsewhere. The rest now appear in print for the first time.

An asterisk attached to the title of a poem indicates that a Note, or Notes, relating to it will be found at the end of the book. A Glossary is appended for those who are not acquainted with Indian terms and expressions.

“None but Anglo-Indians know what a treasure-mine of art, literature, and picturesque description lies unworked in the common experiences of our life in India.”—*Edwin Arnold*.

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Proem.

To what base uses we may return, Horatio! —*Shakspeare.*

Polite trunkmaker, who dost line
Thy boxes with such ware as this,
If thou should'st find these leaves of mine
Prove for thy purpose not amiss ;

I prithee, if it ever be
My critics' page my fortune shares,
Paste not the sheets inscribed by me
In the same trunk that harbours theirs :

Lest haply such discordant matter
Split, sundered by repulsion strong ;
And so thy work untimely shatter,
Which else had bided fair and long.

For if Minerva's frown design
My verses should this office bear,
I would at least the trunk they line
Should be of good and lasting wear.

SONNETS.

I. Our Indian Serbants.

Children of a larger growth.—*Dryden*.

THE PUNKAH-WALLAH.

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole.—*Coleridge.*

Musing I sit, and puff the glowing weed :
Above, my punkah swingeth to and fro ;
Without, the Punkah-wallah, couching low,
Toileth, half-slumbering, for his monthly meed.
For use doth so in him a habit breed,
That his lithe arm, well-drilled its task to know,
Backwards and forwards still doth jerking go,
The while he sleeps and nods and takes no heed.
Yet sometimes, too indulgent of his ease,
Prostrate and motionless, that punkah-man
Will leave his rope to wander where it please.
Then, should one sprinkle water from a pan
On his bare limbs, how swift his slumber flees !
Up starteth he and pulleth all he can.

THE KHANSAMAH.

They will steal anything and call it purchase.—Shakspeare.


At dawn from market wends his homeward way
The Khansamah ; a cooly plods behind,
His crate well-filled with fare of various kind—
Fish, flesh, eggs, tropic fruits, live fowls to slay
At need : repast sufficient for the day.
He books each item straight ; and, to my mind,
That Khansamah the market cheap doth find ;
But dear it grows what time the bill's to pay.
For when the hour is come he should receive
His dues, the housewife spreadeth wide her hands,
Amazed how sorely he doth her bereave
Of household coin hardwon. Meanwhile he stands
Unmoved, and softly laughing in his sleeve,
Void of all shame enforceth his demands.

THE KITMUTGAR.

Let me not stay a jot for dinner : go, get it ready.—*Shakspeare.*

Behind his master's chair at table stands
The turbaned Kitmutgar ; his watchful eyes
Spy out your needs, which straightway he supplies
With swift and noiseless tread and nimble hands.
Or when at others' board mid social bands
Of friends you sit, with him the office lies
To tend you still, for use hath made him wise
To know your tastes, forestalling your commands.
And when from distant cook-house forth he fares
Across the grass, to bring you joint or soup,
It sometimes haps a greedy kite will swoop
Down on the meat, and break the dish he bears.
So he reports ; but my suspicions stoop
To think that bird a mythic aspect wears.

THE BOWARCHI.

Thy soul was like a  and dwelt apart.—*Wordsworth,*

In distant cook-room he abides, like one
That doeth good by stealth and is not seen ;
And, save the witness of our meals, I ween,
Proofs of his being other are there none.
For in these sultry regions of the sun
No housewife doth to kitchen duties lean,
Spot unexplored and hateful. Whence I glean,
That *there* be sights and smells that all men shun.
Yet at his trade no shiftless wight is he.
Once when I journeyed through the livelong day
And pitched my camp at eve, my Bowarchi
With scant supplies and crudest gear I saw
Cook a luxurious meal. My thoughts 'gan stray
To them that fashioned bricks, though reft of straw.

THE MASALCHI.

A youth to fortune and to fame, unknown,—Gray.

In greasy skull-cap clad and jacket red,
Or to the waist for cook-room duties bare,
Speeds the Masalchi, with but slender care
For yon soiled platters piled upon his head,
His office is to cleanse, when folks have fed,
Each plate and dish, and scour the kitchen ware,
Or run perchance on errands here and there ;
And oft, methinks, he toils in others' stead.
For him his lazy fellows will constrain,
A youth and underling, their work to do ;
And then they cuff him, if he dare complain.
His friends are kites and crows ; like comrades true,
Around him still they crowd, a fluttering crew,
Eager their meed of broken meat to gain.

THE BEARER.

All made of faith and service.—Shakspeare.

Our easy Indian home the Bearer sways.
He knows the custom of the house, and well
His master's needs and wishes can he tell
Through patient study of his whims and ways.
At morn that master's person he arrays,
Disrobes him swift when slumber's claims impel,
Attends his shout that stands in lieu of bell,
And still to Morpheus drowsy tribute pays
By skilful interchange of work and sleep.
Store of rupees he wins ; for household gear
Of daily use he buys, and buys full cheap,
Which to his lord he sells again full dear.
Yet spends he little on his frugal cheer ;
Home to his kin he sends the silver heap.

THE AYAH.

O hush thee, my babe!—Scott.

Red-shawled, or with white garment round her head,
Bearing the last new baby in her arms,
And crooning low to still its small alarms,
Lo! where the Ayah walks with sauntering tread.
Beside, in car three-wheeled, by Bearer sped,
Sit children twain, for whom her name hath charms,
That still they call: her heart or temper warms,
She kisses them or smites, and tears are shed.
But most I muse why nearer and more near
Yon Bearer to yon Ayah sidleth still;
And now he softly whispers in her ear,
And now of merry jests he takes his fill.
Low laugheth she those tender words to hear,
Letting the children clamour as they will.

THE COACHWAN.

Let them be men of good repute and carriage.—Shakspeare.

Day after day, in sunshine and in rain,
The much-enduring Coachwan driveth swift
To Court or Office ; for he hath the gift
To bear the heat and wet and not complain.
Yet sometimes will he seek to ease his pain
With opiate *bhang* : then it were well to sift
And mark his ways, or soon your car adrift
May run, ill-guided by his drowsy brain.
One fault he hath beside : he spends, I wot,
On whips my cash more freely than he need ;
(As doubtless also deems my patient steed).
In vain I mend them, for they last him not ;
Whence I suspect that in dishonest plot
My Coachwan and the whip-wright are agreed.

THE SYCE.

I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of
hay.—*Shakspeare.*

Low-perched behind my buggy sits the Syce :
And as along the public road I speed,
He haileth folk in front, who little heed,
Rating their lives and limbs at meagre price.
Or should I turn a corner, in a trice
Down jumpeth he and runs before my steed,
Shouting to gharries of inferior breed
To yield the way. Yet much I fear one vice
He hath : I doubt my patient horse doth share
Unwillingly with him his daily meals.
One groweth fat, the other groweth spare,
Pining with want of corn his keeper steals.
Thine, Syce, methinks is not a soul that feels,
To rob a poor dumb creature of his fare.

THE BHEESTI.

I bring fresh showers.—Shelley.

Like as the organ-man in public road
Beareth his music with him on his back,
Or as the hawker bends beneath his pack,
The Bheesti toileth with his watery load.
The dusty precincts of our town abode,—
The bath, which one could ill endure to lack,
Have oft, when pipe-fed rillet runneth slack,
Their debt of moisture to the Bheesti owed.
So, Bheesti, may'st thou still, at eventide,
Subdue the dust and, foe to all that's dry,
Water the paths where others walk and ride.
Thine is, I ween, no useless destiny ;
Yet thou at length, thy goat-skin laid aside,
Subdued thyself, beneath that dust must lie.

THE MEHTER.

When I beheld this I sighed, and said within myself: Surely mortal man is a broomstick.—*Swift.*

Day after day, bent o'er his stunted broom,
Driving the dust in little circles round,
The humble Mehter sweeps the littered ground
Of each broad compound in the twilight gloom
Of early dawn ; or in some matted room
Plying his lowly toil, with swishing sound
Doth break our morning sleep. Where dogs are found,
They are his care, he being one on whom
All menial charge is laid. One such doth wend
Each evening past my window ; his white hair
Doth to his station mean a reverence lend.
His master's hound beside him gambols there :
The dog no difference knows ; by one man's care
He sees his wants supplied, and loves his friend.

THE DURWAN.

For the watch to babble and talk is most tolerable and not to be endured.—*Shakspere*

Lo! where the Durwan ever at the gate
Sits watchful : beggars far his voice doth scare
And dogs that gather a precarious fare,
Prowling the district round. Tall and sedate,
One that men look on twice, in former date
Haply a soldier of those tribes that bare
Arms in old forays from their Northern lair,
Sikh or Punjâbi. Yet unequal fate
Alas! hath made him songful, and his style,
Harsh-tongued, doth not with my desires agree.
Thus evening hours he loveth to beguile :
I groan and shut my ears, but, book on knee,
He chants his quavering notes and thinks the while
That he doth pour celestial harmony.

*THE MALLI.**

All the flowers and trees do close
To weave the garlands of repose.—*Marvell.*

The ground to turn, the shrubs to lop and prune,
Lightly the Malli laboureth for his hire ;
For, as I deem, he seeks not to perspire
With too much toil beneath the blazing noon.
He plants a while or digs ; and ceasing soon,
When garden labours 'gin his soul to tire,
For shady nook or shed he doth inquire,
Wherein to woo sweet sleep, no hard-won boon.
But wonder fills me where those Mallis go
That deck our homes with flowers week after week
And day by day, though scant our gardens' show.
Some say they forage 'mid the grave-stones bleak.
It boots not, friend, to ask ; enough to know
The Earth hath flowers, and Mallis eyes to seek.

THE CHUPRASSI.

I go, I go, look how I go.—Shakspeare.

Girt with red band, in token of his trade,
Proud of his brazen label's lettered show,
Swift the Chuprassi foots it to and fro
Through street and lane, in sunshine and in shade.
In spacious bag upon his shoulder laid
Each letter and each message doth he stow,
Or by his hand State documents may go,
A solemn trust in wooden box conveyed.
Yet much I think the work, by which he gains
His monthly earnings, small ; for him men see
Expending oft on household cares his pains :
Watching beside the doorway, or may-be
Running stray errands for the family ;
Nor e'en to nurse the baby he disdains.

THE DURZI.

And still be doing, never done.—Butler.

On his square matting in verandah sits
The Durzi, or in vacant spot that lies
Above the staircase swift his needle plies,
And all around him scatters severed bits
And shreds of cloth and threads. He ever hits
The guiding pattern that your care supplies ;
But, leave him to himself, howe'er he tries,
'Tis all in vain, the garment never fits.
I knew a Durzi once, industrious, who
Outshone Penelope of Homer's song ;
For every day he hasted to undo
The work of yesterday, since all was wrong.
And while he fruitless toiled, he gathered too
Wage for those hours of wasted labour long.

THE DHOBI.

This 'tis to have linen and buck-baskets ! —Shukspere.

Following his patient donkey laden sore
With heavy-drooping bags slung pannierwise,
From distant tank to town the Dhobi hies,
His weekly tale of linen borne before.
Behold the hapless citizen deplore,
His Dhobi come, the ruptures that he spies
In garments laid before his wrathful eyes
By the so harmless-seeming man that tore.
He holds it strange ; but let him walk or ride
Unto that Dhobi's pool and view him there,
A sloping plank or rocky slab beside,
With those same garments brandished in mid air :—
The dripping mass descending doth collide
All with that rugged log or granite bare.

THE PINWALLAH.

Our beauties are not ours.—Ben Jonson.

Mid clouds of muslin, flounces, furbelows,
Gauze for the neck, cuffs, collars round and square,
Starching and ironing for ladies fair,
His dainty skill the neat Pinwallah shows.
Deftly to purge our raiment too he knows
From stains disfiguring, and in junctures where
The ruder Dhobi's cleansing powers despair,
To him, more apt, the sullied garment goes.
And when, all freshly clad, at morning-tide,
Sweet maid or matron please the critic eye
Of swain or husband, know their vesture's pride
Is due to poor Pinwallahs' industry.
True is that ancient praise to these applied :
Nought do they touch they do not beautify.

THE BALBER.

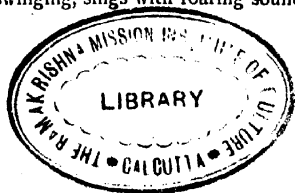
If I do not carve most curiously, say my knife's naught.—Shakspeare.

Each day, as soon as morning beams prevail,
From house to house he plies his useful toil,
Shears from his patrons' heads the hairy spoil,
Or deftly prunes superfluous growth of nail
From finger or from toe. Nor doth he fail
To reap, sans cut or scratch, the stubble soil
Of cheek or chin ; else would loud wrath recoil
Upon him from his victim, prone to rail.
With corns and bunions too his mission lies :
Thus to head, foot, and hand his forming care
A rounded grace and symmetry supplies.
A civilizing power his art doth bear :
Before his keen advancing scissors flies
The long-nailed savage with his matted hair.

THE PALKI-WALLAH.

I cannot draw a cart, nor eat dried oats ;
If it be man's work, I'll do it.—*Shakspeare.*

Swart and bare-limbed, he and his comrades three
Swift through the street on level shoulders bear
Their wooden palanquin. Along they fare
With rhythmic grant, or plaintive melody
That tells how worshipfully fat is he
Who lies within supine. Nor do they spare
To chant his praises with presageful care,
As one who gives tired souls a liberal fee.
The well-fed Babu haunts the *palki* most ;
Or it receives, laid low upon the ground,
Some female poor, to go her begging round.
Or thus perchance a sailor to his post
On board returns from many a midnight toast :—
He, onward swinging, sings with roaring sound.



THE COOLY.

Swinken would I for my meat ;
It is no shame for to swinken.—*Havelok.*

In the hot street beneath the meagre shade
Of wall or slender tree the Cooly sits,
Soothing perchance with sleep his drowsy wits
Or chattering with the fellows of his trade.
Beside him lies his crate, wherein conveyed
Your wares from market homeward he transmits,
Which, now belike that business toil remits,
Inverted forms a pillow for his head.
His sleek and sturdy frame of swarthiest hue
And clad in scantiest vesture, learns to flout
The rain and sun ; he lives his hard life out,
His labours simple and his pleasures few :—
His highest bliss at midnight feast to shout
And sing amid his friends, a noisy crew.

H. Ourselves, and others.

**A chiel's amang ye, takin' notes,
And 'faith he'll prent it!—*Burns.***

THE COVENANTED CIVILIAN.

Not one, but all mankind's epitome.—Dryden.

Or in mofussil suit of holland brown
By solah helmet topt, or haply drest
In silken hat and that well-fashioned vest
Which mark the graceful inmate of the town,—
Lo, the Civilian ! Now he sitteth down
And writes Reports full long ; anon the quest
Of murders foul doth fill him with unrest,
Guaging right well Official smile and frown.
For, versatile, he mounts with equal ease
The Bench or saddle ; here inspecteth swift
A jail, and there a school ; or doth uplift
A voice of warning on the things he sees,
Finance or Famine. Surely one so wise
And prosperous were worth a lady's eyes.

THE SURGEON-MAJOR.

Tower'd cities please us. — Milton.

Like as a rope to those who clutch at straws,
Or like to sheltering caves when showers distil
I deem the Doctor, mid the frequent ill
That English flesh is heir to, under laws
Climatic such as these. The Rajah draws
And Zemindar upon his healing skill,
Their Native art all spent, though of the bill
Too oft oblivious are they, without cause.
Yet large his gains when Fortune's friendly care
To cities posts him : wives and children pale
Rich fees supply, which oft a neighbouring jail
Enhances ; while for him the wedded pair
Do from their income tithe an annual share ;
Besides the hospitals for folk that ail.

THE CHAPLAIN.

*Like Roman jailers when they slept,
Chained to the prisoners they kept.—Butler.*

Placed in this land with no soul-mastering aim,
Feeding a flock that little heeds his care,
That wont to hear perchance or else forbear
His weekly sermon, albeit brief the same,—
The Station Chaplain seeketh still to frame
His stubborn world, the worse for Indian wear,
To fit a Western groove, till to its ear
Repentance seems a dream and Faith a name.
So smaller duties claim him ; schools are planned
Or tombs repaired, or when such labours pall,
In grassy courts he smites the flying ball ;
Or goeth here and there with careful hand
Collecting various moneys. Like a wall
About him frowns the darkness of the land.

THE JUDGE OF THE HIGH COURT.

He seemed
For dignity composed. — *Milton.*

Of graceful presence, his exterior man
With admiration strikes the stranger's sense :
While to the fair he flatteries doth dispense
Celestial, stately, as none other can.
Nor is he of his own magnificence
Unconscious all ; but marching in the van
Of social rank, he struts his little span,
Then, home returned, is lost in shadows dense.
Meanwhile his city life goes smoothly by
Luxurious, till his Indian years are done,
Remote from common men who toil and die
In rural wilds beneath a blazing sun :
Till, pension large and knightly honours won
He gently glideth from the public eye.

THE BARRISTER.

We must needs dine together.—Shakspeare.

Full-fledged in lawyer wisdom, hither speeds
The Barrister, a grateful counterpoise
To rank Civilianism and the noise
Of pedant Bureaus and their jangling creeds.
For of the legal tribe that India breeds
Full lightly doth he deem, strong in the joys
Of Dinners eaten ; yet hath he annoys,
Oft void, alack, of briefs for daily needs.
Nathless he hath his triumphs : comes to sit
A High Court Judge, or enters with a bound
The Legal Secretariat, or is found
For Magisterial Bench supremely fit ;
Or seeks, for large reward, of crime to quit
Some Rajah rich, with arguments profound.

THE SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE.

In the wilds
Of fiery climes he made himself a home.—*Byron.*

A man of bulk and thews, erect and tall,
Whose well-frogged garb and helmet's martial air
E'en from afar do trembling Natives scare,—
He stands, embodied Rule, before them all.
On varied quests, as thefts or murders call,
About his spacious District doth he fare ;
His swarthy underlings his labours share,
Who marks their ways for fear some wrong befall.
But vain too oft his care. Beyond his ken
In Law's great name they grind the helpless poor,
Dread forms that darken many a cottage-door,
With hands that itch for bribes, the people's bane.
Ye venal crew ! that spoil your countrymen
Worse than did theirs the Publicans of yore !

THE COLONEL.

Made and moulded of things past.—*Shakspeare.*

Sunburnt and bald and furrowed deep with store
Of wrinkles earned in Eastern service long,
Lover of social pipe and peg full strong,
And praiser of the famous years of yore,—
The Indian Colonel seeketh whom to bore,
(Like prattling Nestor of Homeric song),
With feats that to those ancient days belong,
What time he first his maiden falchion wore.
Now all is changed, alas, old manners gone!—
But some amends benignant Fortune makes :
A youthful bride the sturdy veteran takes,
And in domestic ease his life flows on ;
While in his lap a grateful nation shakes
Pension and ribbons for old exploits done.

THE COLLEGE PROFESSOR.

A Voice, a mystery. — Wordsworth.

On chair that high its simple state uprears,
With rows of swarthy pupils ranged before,
Sits the Professor, and with varied lore
Their course through Mathematic mazes steers,
Expounds selected Johnson unto ears
That, hearing, understand not, or with store
Of comment Ethic systems doth explore,
Or, lecturing, stains his hands with Chemic smears.
To divers climes indigenous, his speech
Varies as his instruction. Here, to wit,
Sound the broad accents of the northern Scot ;
A son of Erin there essays to teach,
Or wight of German stock. Their scholars sit
Blank-faced, till use makes plain the polyglot.

THE MEM-SAHIB.

In her face,
Though something touched by sorrow, you may trace
The all she was.—A. A. Walls.

Far from the green woods and the breezy shore
Of England, oft remembered as the year
Of heat and damp and coolness circles drear,
The matron dwells, since Love and Fate of yore
Thence her fresh maidenhood to India bore.
Thin is she now, alack, and pale of cheer,
And much she thinketh on her children dear,
Who, reared by strangers, seem her own no more.
Light are her household cares, for smoothly tread
White-robed domestics through the matted rooms,
Each with his several office ; her chief dread
The daily market bill. At midday comes
The soft siesta ; then in twilight glooms
The drive, and her monotonous day is sped.

THE MISSIONARY.

Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?—*Wordsworth.*

Sure he had need of Heavenly might to come
To this far Orient, dulled by languor's charm
And custom's frost, to lift his puny arm
Against the force inert of heathendom.
His heart, at starting, with despair is numb;
But learning soon to still his first alarm,
His half-dead hopes he seeks to nurse and warm
With Schools and Lectures, till his fears grow dumb.
And so, the old enthusiasm and the chill
Alike of early disappointment fled,
His sober days he passes, hoping still
Of the vast harvest here before him spread
To reap some ears, though few. Hath he not read
What Faith, the mountain-mover, can fulfil?

THE EURASIAN.

Lo, at their births good stars were opposite.—Shakspeare.

Chiefly among his friends of kindred hue
Lives the Eurasian, shunning to consort
With strangers, since he knows the vulgar thought
Men hold about him, and the haughty view.
He deems no Native a good man and true ;
Nor can the other, on his part, he brought
To own *his* worth. And hence his path is fraught
With thorns of discontent that pierce him through.
Our Rulers view with fond paternal eye
The sleek Bengali, passing coldly by
Stepmother-wise these innocent hapless ones
In whose mixed veins the blood of Britain runs.
Methinks I hear indignant Nature cry,
"O England, who are these, if not thy sons?"

THE MISSY BABA.

When I was at home, I was in a better place.—*Shakspeare.*

Why comes the English maiden to this clime,
That thins her cheek and turns its roses pale?
How soon, alas, the summer's scorching gale
Doth wither all the freshness of her prime!
What hath she here to fill the languid time?
Siestas, gossip, dress,—a soon-told tale;
Balls, half-presageful of a marriage veil,
Or Church, whose bells half-hint a marriage chime.
To queen it doubtless to a maid is sweet;
And this she wins, for every Phyllis here
Hath Corydons in plenty at her feet.
But yet methinks there is a life more meet,
In the fair English home remote and dear,
Which makes these little triumphs seem but drear.

THE ZEMINDAR.

The little tyrant of his fields.—Gray.

In house whose walls are weather-stained and dank,
While all within each shuttered window hides ;
Around, with tangled garden girt,—abides
The Zemindar ; belike of ancient rank,
And stout of paunch withal and lean of shank.
There with him lodged dwell all his kin besides,
A greedy crew ; on what his wealth provides
Slothful they live their life, an aimless blank.
Meanwhile his neighbour Zemindars he eyes
With looks askance, oft spending his estate
In suits litigious : jealously he tries
The local School perchance to dominate ;
Strong in the landlord gains and feudal state
Which that Perpetual Settlement supplies.

THE RYOT.

We are pressed by heavy laws. — Wordsworth.

Palm-shadowed, on the vast Gangetic plain
Stands his low clay-built cottage, thatched with reeds.
Its one room holds the little that he needs :
His brazen vessels, earthen jar for grain
Hard-won, his hookah, soother of his pain,
And corded bedstead rude. He scanty heeds,
So food suffice, the toilsome life he leads ;
A patient man, too simple to complain.
And sometimes 'mid his fellows, as they troll
Their rustic songs at eve, in mellower mood,
He half forgets the ills that tame his soul :
The nightly tiger thirsting for his blood,
The ambushed cobra gliding from its hole,
Nature's blind force, the famine and the flood.

THE BENGALI BABU.

A body, a kind of body.—*Middleton.*

Keen-witted, voluble, more plump than tall,
With feet well-shod but hatless head and nude,
Supple of mind and versatile of mood,
Before me stands the Babu of Bengal.
His unabashed demeanour he doth call
His independence, nor doth deem it rude,
With self-complacent confidence imbued
That in his simple ways he pleaseth all.
Void is his soul of Reverence : gods of clay,
Abandoned long, have left him in their place
A blank unfilled. Nature and Time and Space
Stir not his heart, so he may win his way,
Obtain a post in Governmental pay,
Or gain, assiduous, his superiors' grace.

THE EUROPEAN LOAFER.

A tainted wether of the flock.—*Shakspeare.*

Gaunt and unshorn, belike in tattered guise,
The Loafer trampeth whither fortune please,
Along the high road, twixt the dusty trees,
Himself as dusty. Oft with blood-shot eyes,
Dazed by the pitiless glare, he vainly tries
To spy some shelter ; all around he sees
An alien race that ever from him flees,
Or stares a stony stare in scornful wise.
Yet on through villages and hamlets goes
From Station unto Station this poor wight,
Nature and man against him in their might.
Alms won by force or cunning he bestows
On drink, his ruin. Comes at length the close,
He drops like withered leaf in autumn night.

SONNETS.

III. Miscellaneous.

*MOUNTAIN-RANGES.**

The deep-domed empyrean
Rings to the roar of an angel onset.—*Tennyson.*

Mid Himalaya's heights I gazed, that bound
And sentinel the North. Behind, before,
Like giants overcome that hope no more,
Lay ridge and fell, huge carcasses embrowned
And scarred with years, their mighty limbs around
Confusedly spread and dimmed by vapours hoar.
So Satan's host, down-driven from Heaven's high door
Fell prone, stretched o'er the leagues of Hell's profound.
Beyond, erect and tall, in clear array,
Lifting triumphant their white crests that blushed
Rose-red with vermeil hues of opening day,
Sheer into the azure soared the peaks of snow.
So Heaven's archangels towered, their foreheads flushed
With pride of that victorious overthrow.

*THE TAJ MAHAL.**

Kings for such a tomb would wish to die.—*Milton.*

I.

Thou miracle of marble ! who can paint
Thy glorious dome and goodly towers that rise
Against the clear blue of these cloudless skies
In snow-white splendour, pure without a taint !
Like solemn lawn-clad vestal or fair saint
Thou standest as for worship ; all men's eyes
Gaze on thy majesty with rapt surprise ;
Words fail upon the lips, the heart is faint
With too much beauty. In thy spiritual grace
Not of this earth thou seem'st : did ghostly might
Of faery hands thy shapely features trace,
Or phantom music rear thee in thy place ?—
We watch half-trembling lest the vision bright
Fade, like the Enchanter's palace, from our sight.

II.

And now the silver radiance of the moon
Sleeps on thy pearly splendours, framed between
Dark cypress and tall palm : a tender sheen,
More seemly than the dazzling glare of noon ;
While glistening fountains join their murmuring tune ;
And, in wide curve, old Jumna's waters lean
Against thy walls, and round so fair a scene
Lingers the wave, with thy white image strewn.
Yet, 'mid that wondrous loveliness, our eye
A mist of pity dims. Alas ! these towers,
These gorgeous panels set with jewelled flowers
Heard, as they rose, the faint despairing cry
Of toil-worn thousands, moaning, " Lo ! we die
" With our dead queen ; her tomb we build is ours."

THE KUTUB MINAR. **

*As yourselves your empires fall,
And every kingdom hath a grave,—Habington.*

I stood upon the giant tower that springs
In five fair storeys from old Delhi's plain,
(Of red stone three, of milk-white marble twain),
Above the palaces and tombs of kings.
Beneath, the sun its Eastern splendour flings
On mammoth ruins of the ancient reign ;
Strongholds of chiefs long since in battle slain,
And mouldering relics of forgotten things.
For on these desolate fields hath elder Time
Seen many a mighty city reared, to tell
How empire after empire rose and fell.
Their fragments strew the ground. Here, where I climb,
Afar our English Delhi shineth well :—
Shall she fall, like the cities of the prime ?

THE ORDER OF THE STAR OF INDIA.

Heaven's Light our Guide.—*Motto of the S. of I.*

Fair star, that glitterest on the honoured breast
Of England's sons and India's, for a sign
And badge of faithful toil and deeds that shine
Glorious like 'thee in jewelled lustre drest ;—
O Eastern star, if what thou augurest
May be divined by any art of mine,
I wot no influence angry or malign
Lurks in thy genial ray for East or West.
Thine is, methinks, an orb that bodeeth good ;
A light of Hope and loftiest Brotherhood,
Knitting two lands in deeds of noble worth :
Like that one Star that fired the Eastern sky,
(A guiding flame in holy days gone by)
And flashed a dawn of promise through the earth.

*SLAUGHTER GHAUT, CAWNPORE.**

This is no common waste, no common gloom,—Wordsworth.

Beside the Ganges' banks a rude ravine
Slopes to the flood, and on the river's brink
Stands a small shrine, that those who come to drink
Or bathe, may worship ;—now, alas, a scene
Of dreadful note from that which there hath been.
For to this spot do saddest memories link
A tale of blood from which man's spirits shrink,
And falsest treachery the world hath seen.
And as I looked, methought before me there
Slow moved the long procession to the shore,
Sick men and pale-faced children ; the quick roar
Of muskets pealed, and flashed the sabres bare !
—I turned ; the river shone with glassy floor,
O'erarched by azure skies serene and fair.

THE DEAD CROW.

I know how to curse.—*Shakspeare.*

Perched on a palm hard by my window sat
A crow ; he knew that I was hatching rimes,
And rudely cawed not once but several times,
Of purpose to annoy. The Indian cat
Shuns crows ; attacked, they give him tit for tat.
So, lest they 'scape all penance for their crimes,
Bow and mud pellets, engines of these climes,
I keep ; wherewith I laid the brawler flat.
Then all the crows of all the region round
Flocked hopping 'mid the branches overhead,
Or to and fro on fluttering pinions sped,
And croaked in deafening chorus ; 'twas a sound
Of wrath and not of mourning for the dead :
And all for that one crow upon the ground.

THE RAINBOW ON THE HIMALAYAS.

Trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.—*Wordsworth.*

Of times whose gracious memories wax not old,
Fresh in my heart abides one golden day,
When, o'er these mountains as I bent my way,
A glorious vision did my eyes behold.
For down one tree-clad vale, through mist that rolled
Beneath, the sunlight streamed with watery ray,
And blazoned on the slope the splendour lay,
Purple and emerald and azure and gold.
Then can it be the innocent heaven looks forth
Upon this lower world with alien eyes,
As one grown vile since their twin stainless birth?—
Nay, for methought the sweet and far-off skies,
In the pure touch of those translucent dyes,
Stooped softly to caress their kindred earth.

THE GANGES.

The battle is for ever ; Life and Death,
Darkness and Light,—*Emily Pfeiffer.*

Lo where the Ganges with her sister bands
Of streams wide rolls her palms and shrines among !
Bright gleams the wave, whose praise her boatman's
song

Hymns, as she moves, a goddess, through the lands.
Fair waters false ! what wild and swirling sands
And treacherous currents 'neath your surface throng,
That clutch the swimmer in embraces strong,
Dragged down and strangled with their snaky hands !—
Such is Man's Life ; on whose tide float the light
Gay foam of Hope and tender ripples bright
Of Love and Joy ; while from the desolate
Blind depths dark eddies swift, that lurk beneath,
Stretch dreadful arms to seize him : Time and Fate,
Pain and Desire and Fear, Despair and Death.

*THE RESIDENCY CHURCHYARD, LUCKNOW.**

O thou whom chance leads to this nameless stone,
Forget all feuds. — *Macaulay.*

From domes and palaces I bent my way
Where, like some Titan by Jove's thunder marred,
Frown the old battered portal-towers that guard
The storied ruins of a glorious fray.
In patient stillness house and bastion lay,
As they had fallen ; for the fight was hard
That saw their walls by myriad bullets scarred,
When those few steadfast warriors stood at bay.
There, by the English tombs of those who fell
In that fierce struggle 'twixt the East and West,
A few green mounds are seen, where peaceful rest
India's brave sons that perished fighting well
For England too. What heart its feud can keep
Beside these graves where our dark comrades sleep ?

NIGHT NOISES.

Not a voice was idle, — Wordsworth.

Slumbering I lay, but in my room a rat
Rustled and scratched, till I could sleep no more.
Then up I rose, and through the curtained door
Passed ; all around did dusky forms lie flat,
My household train that snored upon the mat,
'Mid whose bare limbs I wound across the floor
And gained the dim verandah. Screeching sore,
Forth flapped an owl, and restless hummed the gnat.
A fitful night breeze round the palm-tree's plume
Whispered, and mixed with rival bark of dogs
Came the long howl of jackals through the gloom ;
Shrill piped the tireless crickets, and the frogs
Obstreperous croaked ; while from their quiet skies
The stars kept watch with patient lidless eyes.



BRAHMANISM.

I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. — *Shakspeare.*

Fainting upon his face a traveller lay,
Struck down by sudden plague. One after one,
Folk passed ; above him blazed the pitiless sun,
But no one paused, though many came that way.
Alas ! Religion, dainty of array,
With skirts updrawn, stood by and bade men shun
The low-caste stranger ; and since here were none
Durst feed or aid him, wherefore should they stay ?—
O haughty wearers of the sacred thread,
Who bind these burdens on poor sinful men,
When in that hall the eternal lamps illumine
The marriage supper of the King is spread,
And for Earth's mean ones pitying Heaven finds room,
What will ye do ?—Will ye be outcasts then ?

MODERN BENGAL.

Words, words, words.—Shakspere.

Chatterjis, Mukerjis, and Banerjis !
(Time-honoured names by India's priestly law)
Have ye not haply heard that ancient saw,
How greatest sound with emptiness agrees ?
Behold where Want beside Luxurious Ease
Demands some other cure than projects raw.
Is Freedom this—that, void of wholesome awe,
A man should write and say what thing he please ?
Orators, Editors, who would lead the van
Of India's march, yourselves be just and true :
Manners, I ween, not rhetoric, maketh man,
And his best hope soars higher than rupees.
Ye talk and scheme,—when will ye rise and do,
Banerjis, Mukerjis, and Chatterjis ?

PREFATORY SONNET

TO 'THE INDIAN REVIEW.'

Like those to whom in dreams vague whispers come,
Confused and strange, so in the lotus noon
Of this dull East we hear the mighty tune
Far far away, the murmur and the hum
Of full-pulsed life : for lo ! our hearts are numb
With tropic languors ; Nature yields her boon
Unasked ; through palm and fig a larger moon
Shines from calm skies ; we stir not, we are dumb.
And shall we, men who hold our England dear,
With these faint echoes still contented rest
Of Europe's stormful music ?—Nay, for here
Rings a new Voice that, gathering of the best,
Heralds in tones articulate and clear
The giant workings of the vigorous West.

LYRICAL PIECES.

*MORNING RIDES.**

Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher. — *Wordsworth.*

Some, ere they take their morning plunge,
Speed o'er the *Maidan* wildly ;
Give me a lane in Ballygunge,
Wherein to canter mildly.
A pony for these country days
More handy is and cheaper,
To wind about the woodland ways,
And dodge the dangling creeper.

Still, on the 'Course' our ladies take
Their outdoor recreation ;
They think a bamboo just a stake
For bullock-carts' formation :
They have not seen it where 'tis found
Attired as Nature pleases,
With thousand feathery leaflets crowned,
That frolic in the breezes !

The broad Palmyra's rustling fan
Clanks, as your pony passes ;
The Banyan stretches many a span
Above the meadow grasses ;
On pool and tank the Lotus spreads
Her flowers of pearly lustre ;
And droops in verdurous garden beds
The Plantain's yellowing cluster.

The fair Areca, straight and tall,
Shoots upwards like a steeple ;
The morning breezes rise and fall
In whispers through the Peepul ;
They toss the Coco's leafy plume,
Her rude trunk gently swaying,
And round the Tamarind's russet bloom
They linger, idly playing.

Look where the light Acacia spreads
Her little balls of blossom ;
Poinsettias flaunt their blazing reds,
That tiniest flowers embosom.
Half-hid beneath their silvan screen,
The merry sparrows twitter
Amid the thousand shades of green
That in the sun-beams glitter !

The crows fly round their leafy homes,
 Their insect prey pursuing ;
From yon sequestered covert comes
 The turtle's drowsy cooing ;
The vulture on his lonely palm
 Sits mute, demurely gloating ;
And high amid the azure calm
 The broad-winged kite is floating.

Then forth o'er mead and field you fare,
 By grassy ridges skirted ;
Here tethered cattle graze, and there
 Lie wooden ploughs deserted.
Hard strain the cows, in wild amaze,
 The cords their horns that hamper ;
One anxious moment stand at gaze,
 Then flee in headlong scamper !

Thus, through the sunny paths you ride,
 Fresh in their green adorning ;
Swart urchins from the hamlet side
 Will shout a shrill ' Good morning !'
The village curs will yelp and bay
 At such a strange intruder ;
While children stare and stop their play,
 Who cannot well be nuder !

Since Fate for years perchance a score
To tropic regions lends me,
I fain would revel in the store
Voluptuous Nature sends me.
In Indian glades her voice, I ween,
Is sweet to worthy comers
Who wander mid the fadeless green
Of these unfleeting summers !

THE OLD PUNKAH-WALLAH.

I could have laughed myself to scorn to find
In that decrepit man so firm a mind.—*Wordsworth.*

Our ways are full of sound and strife,
Ambition clouds our years ;
We break the quiet calms of life
With restless hopes and fears.

Sometimes methinks we well might learn
From humble lives we shun
How uncomplaining toil may earn
The crown of duty done.

There was a man, an aged wight,
He was not stout and strong ;
Who wont to pull, as best he might,
My punkah all day long.

In sooth he was a withered man,
Exceeding lean to see ;
Yet as he swung my pendent fan,
Nor dozed nor faltered he.

He was so old and wrinkle-lined,
My wonder still increased
To think with such a constant mind
He toiled and never ceased.

No word he spoke ; the long day through
He patient sat and meek ;
And resolute his work to do,
Forgot his strength was weak.

Brief hours were his for rest and food ;
And ever to his post
He back returned in punctual mood,
As though he loved it most.

For comrades' talk or jest I doubt
He had but little care ;
So silently he moved about
On legs both thin and bare.

He seemed, as passed his lonely hours,
To one sole aim to cling :
To husband his remaining powers
And make my punkah swing.

His life was like a standing pool,
Rock-sheltered from the sky ;
No lights or shadows stirred its cool
And calm monotony.

One day I wondered much to spy
My punkah's motion stopt.
Dozing that aged man, thought I,
At last his rope has dropt.

Anon I rose and looked around,
But still I wondered on ;
For there the dangling cord I found,
But he that pulled was gone.

And with a kind of sad surprise
I gazed, to think that one
Who laboured in such steadfast wise
Should leave his task undone.

But soon his resting-place was known,
Nor was he far astray ;
For in an outhouse all alone
Stone-dead the old man lay.

Still faithful he had borne his part
Down to his latest breath ;
Till Nature to that patient heart
Whispered that this was death.

The measure of his toil was full,
He felt his hour was nigh ;
He gave his rope one final pull,
And then retired to die.

And hence I said we well might learn
From humble lives we shun
How uncomplaining toil may earn
The crown of duty done.

ODE TO A MOSQUITO.

Though she be but little, she is fierce.—*Shakspeare.*

I.

Little plaguy creature,
On my 'prominent feature'
Settling, as on some tall pulpit mounts a preacher,

I ween thou dost opine
The human nose divine
Was made to be a perch and pasture-ground of thine!

Forth on pinions pliant,
Like the fabled giant,
Rov'st thou, on thy scent of English blood reliant.

Fee and faw and fum
In thy eager hum
I can hear, as near and nearer thou dost come.

Creature so ethereal,
Delicate, aerial,
Ah ! how canst thou feast on such a gross material ?

Can the tiger's thirst,
Vampire's greed accurst
Within a faery form such as thine be nurst ?

Thy repast should be
Nectar of the bee,
Or ambrosial dew were fitter food for thee.

As thy way thou wingest,
Shrilly still thou singest,
And thy trumpet sounds to battle ere thou stingest.

Thee away I whisk,
But back thou boundest brisk,
And dost round and round importunately frisk.

Foraging for dinner,
Like a worldly sinner,
So long as thou art fat, careless who is thinner !

Maiden young and vernal,
Babe or shrivelled colonel,
All alike are spoil for thee, thou imp infernal !

Soon a spot thou sightest,
Nimbly thou alightest
Where our limbs are bare or where our clothes are tightest !

For raiment is not proof
To keep thy sting aloof ;
Lo ! thy tiny barb slips 'twixt warp and woof.

Then—ah, goodness gracious !—
From thy beak sagacious
Darting lancets seven, thou glut'st thy maw voracious !

And thou chant'st a chorus
Of thy triumph o'er us,
Praising fate that made skin of man so porous.

I with stroke ungainly
Strive to smite thee vainly ;—
Harm, instead of thee, my own person mainly.

And a sound of laughter,
Seems to echo after,
Airy peals that shrill o'er-head from roof and rafter.

II.

Through the night thou wakest,
Others' slumbers breakest,
Prowling like a thief then thy prey thou takest.

Hid within a fold
Of my curtained hold,
When I dozing lie, forth thou dartest bold.

Melancholy-drear
To the listening ear,
In the silent dark, sounds thy fluting clear.

Like a ghostly thing,
Weirdly murmuring,
Viewless dost thou glide on thy buzzing wing.

But my woes increase
When thy hummings cease ;
For I know a bite is presaged by thy peace.

Yet it seems to be
Passing strange that we,
Lords of earth, should furnish food for such as thee.

And thou well may'st shout
Little pæans out,
When thou sittest down to thy drinking-bout.

Fool !—At morn's arrival
Comes thy joy's deprival ;
Thou art prisoned ; brief will be thy survival.

Rising from my bed
I shall strike thee dead,
And thy nightly meal will dye my fingers red !

Sometimes I hear thy cry
Outside my canopy,
As thou seekest still some inlet to espy.

Soothed by slumber's charm,
Should my careless arm
Against the curtain lean, not suspecting harm ;

For small mercies grateful,
Down thou swoonest hateful,
And before it stirs, thou hast ta'en thy plateful !

III.

Profligate marauder !
General defrauder !
When wilt thou begin to set thy house in order ?

Shall the Hindu peasant
Ever, as at present,
For thy riddance make his hut with smoke unpleasant ?

Must, on river stations,
Sailors of all nations,
By thee tortured, utter painful imprecations ?

Still must maiden tender,
Fresh from England, render
Up to thy defacing touch her beauty's splendour ?

Shall, when we are dining,
Our poor feet, reclining
'Neath the table, feel thy little auger mining ?

Still shall punkah's breeze,
Bring no nightly case
To our weary limbs which thy stings tease ?

Ah ! thou dost not hear me ;
Yet thou flittest near me,
With thy tiny lance ready still to spear me.

Vain is all repining ;
For, to my divining,
E'en mosquitos small must, like men, be dining .

Mixed with gold there dross is ;
Life must have its crosses,
And our frames endure the prick of thy proboscis !

INDIAN CEMETERIES.

Affecting the graves of giants, under hilly and heavy coverings.—*Sir T. Browne.*

I wandered near the ponderous tombs,
With pillared roofs and domes o'erspread,
That seem to shroud in heavier glooms
The places of the dead.

Few stranger Christian sights, I ween,
Hath India's alien soil to show
Than these huge monuments to screen
The scanty clay below.

Such masses piled above their dust
Should give, methinks, these souls forlorn
Sore pains to break their prisoning crust
On Resurrection morn.

I muse, in wilder days of yore,
Gaunt jackals dug for buried men ;
Whence haply this stone-paven floor
Preserved them from their ken.

Or were they framed, these fabrics vast,
To brave the shocks of stormy times,
Rude earthquakes and the cyclone's blast,
That haunt these tropic climes ?

In vain ; the might of sun and shower
Hath slowly wrought more harm than they ;
Pillar and obelisk and tower
Are crumbling to decay.

The ruined wall is black with years ;
Around, rank jungle grasses wave ;—
Could ever gentle human tears
Have dropt on such a grave ?

Away ; these mammoth structures drear
The heart with wistful memories fill ;
Away ; methinks that, buried here,
My bones would scarce lie still.

And this far vision met my view :—
A daisied mound, a simple tomb,
In churchyard shaded by the yew,
And sweet with violets' bloom.

SPRING IN CALCUTTA.

All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.—*Tennyson.*

The cool and pleasant days are past,
The sun above the horizon towers ;
And Eastern Spring, arriving fast,
Leads on too soon the sultry hours.

The Palas on each crowded spray
Spreads out its wealth of scarlet bloom,
Memorials of a glorious fray,
And garlands meet for hero's tomb.

From greener height the Palm looks down ;
A livelier hue the Peepuls share ;
And sun-lit Poincianas crown
With golden wreaths their branches bare.

The thickly-budding Cotton-tree
For not a single leaf has room ;
It stands, a wondrous sight to see,
One ruddy blaze of coral bloom !

The ships that by the river's brim,
At anchor, lift their shining sides
Against the red sun's westering rim,
Swing to the wash of stronger tides.

Right through and through their planks are hot ;
How must the sailor long to be
Released from such a dreary lot,
Once more afloat on the green sea !

The kite hangs basking overhead ;
The sparrows flit within our rooms ;
The crow sits still with wings outspread,
And airs, at rest, his sultry plumes.

In street and lane the burning glow
Reflected strikes from ground and wall :—
Ice-laden coolies, mute and slow,
Across the *Maidan* homeward crawl.

With measured grunt and glistening limb,
The *palki*-bearers ambling run ;
O'er-head their rude umbrellas dim,
With palm-leaf shade, the dazzling sun.

On couch of cane the matron lies,
While sways above the punkah slow ;
And pining 'neath these tropic skies,
The little children paler grow.

About the landscape, here and there,
Unshadowed pools, half shrunk and dry,
Gaze upward with a sullen glare
Upon a brazen vault of sky.

No insects hum in silvan bower ;
In spectral stillness stand the trees ;—
Come, blessing of our evening hour,
Come forth and blow, sweet southern breeze !

To us that ocean freshness lend
Which from the wave thy breath receives ;
Ripple these glassy tanks and send
A murmur through the silent leaves !

See, blurred with amber haze, the sun
'Neath yon dim flats doth sink to rest ;
And tender thoughts, that homeward run,
Move fondly with him to the west.

They leave these hot and weary hours,
The iron fate that girds us round,
And wander 'mid the meadow flowers
And breezy heights of English ground.

The sun is set ; we'll dream no more ;
Vainly for us the vision smiles ;—
Why did we quit thy pleasant shore,
Our happiest of the Happy Isles !



*THE BURRISAUŁ GUNS.**

Heard ? have you never heard, when the storm on the downs began,
The wind that it wail like a child and the sea that 't moon like a man ?—*Tennyson*

Hark to that rolling sound like cannon's boom,
 Pealing through upper air in solemn swell ;
Ganges hath heard it oft at twilight gloom,
 And Megna knows it well.

Listen, it rumbles like the muffled growl
 Of thunder, or the drear and sullen roar
Heard from afar when waves storm-beaten howl
 On some forsaken shore.

'Tis said that, marshalled by aerial hands,
 From phantom guns the mystic noise is rolled,
In praise of one who ruled these stream-fed lands,
 A famous chief of old.

Or haply from the Bay, when storms are o'er,
 Echoes, far inland borne, this sound of might,
When league-long billows, poised aloft, the shore
 With single buffet smite :

Or when far o'er this shifting delta wide
These headlong rivers mine their crumbling walls,
And the tall bluff sheer in the weltering tide
With noise of thunder falls.

We know not ; but at times sad fancies lone
Methinks may hear in that wild rolling sound
The great sky uttering forth a dolorous groan
Of sympathy profound ;—

A note of mourning for the plague-struck bands
Of starving ryots in their ceaseless toil ;
A sigh of Nature o'er these ruined lands,
The Flood's and Whirlwind's spoil.

Alas ! that Earth and Sky should speak to all
In mild Memnonian music, sweet and clear,
In vain ; and now deep unto deep must call,
Ere men have ears to hear.

THE BALLAD OF NIGHT PUNKAHS.

He seeks out mighty charms to trouble sleepy minds.—*Spenser.*

'Twas in the torrid month of May,
When southern breeze had ceased to play,
That on my bed at night I lay.

I watched my punkah to and fro
More gently and more gently go,
And ever hotter did I grow.

Without, my punkah-wallah sat ;
Full well I knew what he was at ;
'Twas this—to pull and yet lie flat.

Methought, if only he would stop,
And once his rope completely drop,
Then quickly from my couch I'd hop ;—

Forth from my chamber softly creep,
Exultant catch him sound asleep,
And on him wreak my vengeance deep.

Alas ! that punkah, failing sore,
Would still recover from death's door,
And stir its sleepy folds once more.

I thought of Tantalus's grief,
Who for his hunger's vain relief
Was fed with sight of wine and beef.

I mused on that Sicilian lord
Who eyed above his head the sword
Suspended by a horse-hair cord.

And still that punkah to and fro
Would gently and more gently go,
And ever hotter did I grow.

* * * * *

I woke ; warm perspiration dropt
From brow by punkah's breeze unmopt ;
Vici ! Eureka ! It has stopt !

I listened, and outside my door
I heard a sound unheard before ;
It was my punkah-wallah's snore !

Then like as one who sily tries
A creeping cockroach to surprise,
Nears it with murder in his eyes ;—

Or as, at eve, a lizard small
That spies a fly upon the wall,
Doth closer still and closer crawl ;—

So, lifting light my pillowed head,
I gat me softly from the bed,
And forth I set with noiseless tread.

And like a spectre in the gloom,
I groped around the midnight room,
To find my instrument of doom.

Now hand, now foot my passage steers ;
My heart the thought of vengeance cheers ;
Mosquitoes buzzed about my ears.

In circling course the wall I hug ;
And hauling clear of soap and mug,
Cast anchor at the water-jug.

As when a monkey at the Zoo,
Thrusting its paws the cage-bars through,
Clutches with joy a bonnet new :

So did I seize that watery store ;
Then barefoot stole across the floor,
And reached the purdah of my door.

I spied the wallah on his mat,
And saw at once what he'd been at ;
Which was—to pull and yet lie flat.

But now the punkah-rope had fled
From out his fingers loosely spread,
And idly dangled o'er his head.

There on his back in careless state
Bare-limbed he lay, and snored sedate,
Unconscious of impending fate.

He dreamt, belike, of rice and ghee ;
Or of the store of pice there be
Comprised in one ill-earned rupee.

And like a man who smiles to see
A small mosquito ^{on} his knee,
Ready to smite it ere it flee ;

So, for one moment, fixed I stood ;
Then heaving high my pitcher good,
Full in his face I launched the flood !

RAIN.

There is, sure, another flood toward.—*Shakspeare.*

It falls as if emptied from tubs,
Mid thunder and flashes ;
It swishes through trees and through shrubs,
It roars and it splashes ;
It filleth the ditches up all,
O'erfloweth the gutters ;
It clatters on roof and on wall,
And batters the shutters !

The drains of the city it chokes,
And floodeth the byways ;
'Tis absurd under cover of cloaks
To walk in the highways.
And as for umbrellas, you know,
'Tis useless to bring 'em,
For it ~~s~~pat^tters your garments below,
And soaketh your gingham !

Unceasingly gushing it falls
Both daily and nightly,
In your rooms it appears on the walls
In blotches unsightly.
In the funnels by which 'tis conveyed
The weak points it searches ;
It drowns the remarks that are made
By preachers in churches.

Heavy work for your dusters it makes
To clean and to brush rooms ;
The boots in your chamber it flakes
With incipient mushrooms !
It rotteth your harness, if old,
Involving much payment ;
It covers your quartos with mould,
With mildew your raiment !

Ah ! then on the *Maidan* what bogs,
What swamps and morasses !
What croaking and grunting of frogs
In jubilant masses !
What assortments of flies in your soup,
In your brandy-and-sodas !
What stings from some of the group,
From others what odours !

By the river's half-overflowed banks,
By the paddy-fields' ridges,
Or skimming the surface of tanks,
In clouds dance the midges.
And as for those insects that hop,
Out at eve should you linger,
So deafening's their din that you stop
Up each ear with a finger !

Some skip, and some fly, and some crawl
O'er your table at dinner ;
Some are short, and some bloatedly sprawl,
Some are longer and thinner ;
Some are black, some are blue, some ~~are~~ green,
Some have horns, some antennæ ;
Some have legs quite a few to be seen,
Some immoderately many.

One insect uncommonly like
The twig of a plant is ;
'Tis sure your attention to strike,
The singular Mantis.
It holds up its forelegs on high,
Looks prayerful and touching ;
But all its religion's a fly
Which it wants to be clutching !

But the cockroach is worst in my eyes,
(That uncleanest of creatures !)
As at night through your window he flies,
And walks o'er your features.
And when you've extinguished the light,
'Tis scarcely delicious
To discover that centipedes bite
And scorpions are vicious.

Yet mark where, to moisture inclined,
The fire-flies cluster ;
Each carries a lantern behind
Of tremulous lustre ;—
Mid the gloom and the glamour of night
Little flame-spirits dancing ;
A myriad sparkles of light,
Careering and glancing !

Look then on Bengal, should you chance
To dwell in that region ;
The fields are a glassy expanse,
The rivers are legion :
And their roar may be heard far away,
As, eddying and swirling,
In measureless width to the Bay,
Their currents are hurling.

Here and there, on an eminence placed,
Brown hamlets are lying,
Little isles in the watery waste,
Where the dank winds are sighing
Through the rice-fields that over the fen
Their green blades are rearing,—
Foreboding to beasts and to men
The tempest's appearing.

Clear stands up the palm 'gainst the cloud
Wide-hovering and livid ;
The thunder is sudden and loud,
The lightning is vivid ;
Aloft whirls the dust through the skies,
Before the gale sweeping ;
And headlong, in passionate wise,
Come the water-drops leaping.

But westward at sunset behold
What colours are blended !
What vistas of purple and gold,
Fantastic and splendid !
What cloud-masses towering between,
In motionless cluster !
What hints of glories unseen,
Ethereal lustre !

And oft through the watery air,
When noon is declining,
An opaline radiance rare
Spreads streaming and shining
Wide over the uppermost verge
Of the cloud black and thund'rous ;—
Bright hues that in bright hues merge,
Prismatic and wondrous !

Then what though the rain and the gloom
Our spirits may sober,
This tropical India's doom
From June to October ;
We will gaze at these eloquent skies,
Nor despise without reason
Such solace as Nature supplies
In her dreariest season.

THE TIGER.

Did he who made the lamb make thee? — *Blake.*

Tiger, thine is a cruel eye,
And thy forehead is broad and low ;
And thou hast a supple and shapely thigh,
And thy form has a snaky flow ;
As the oceanswell rolls smooth and well,
When the storm has ceased to blow.

What twisted nerves and splendid curves
Thy stately limbs surround !
They seem to the sight to quiver with might,
As they lightly touch the ground ;—
With a might that sleeps in their sinewy deeps,
Ready to wake with a bound.

Methinks it were a grim delight
To stroke thy silky hide,
Or like a faun through the forest night
On thy glossy back to ride ;
And beneath me to feel thy muscles of steel
And the sweep of thy rhythmic stride.

Thou glitterest under the moon and stars
In thy robe of princely show,
All broidered over with sable bars
On a saffron ground below ;
Like cloud-wreaths rolled athwart the gold
Of a sky in its sunset glow.

What Fury fell hath shaped so well
Those lithe dread limbs of thine ?
What hand of Doom hath plied the loom
That wove thy vesture fine ?
What Stygian beam fed the angry gleam
With which thine eyeballs shine ?

Tiger, rest in thy jungle lair,
We would hear the sweet birds' song.
Shall the matin' calm of the summer air
Be vexed with thy roaring strong ?
Night is the time for deeds of crime,
Blood and ravin and wrong.



*THE DEAD PALM.***Unking'd.—Shakspeare.*

Fair growth of India's silvan ground,
I praise the Palm-tree greatly ;
With tasselled plume imperial crowned,
It stands so tall and stately ;
And on its fellow trees around
It looketh down sedately.

But, withered, with it wholly fade
The praises here I render ;
For vanished in the forest glade
Is then its grace so tender ;
High soars its trunk, but disarrayed
Of all its crested splendour.

Alas ! a man could weep to view
The piteous transformation ;
The lordly tree so late he knew
Mid Nature's fair creation,
Now towers discrowned against the blue,
In flaunting desolation.

It stands, a monument of foiled
And profitless endeavour ;
An image of a Life despoiled,
Condemned from joy to sever ;—
Of Honour lost, of Sweetness soiled,
Of Beauty gone for ever !

BENARES.

What is the city like the people?—*Shakspeare.*

Time-honoured City ! lo, I tread
With English foot thy sacred sod,
And touched by no religious dread
Go sauntering on from god to god,
Where altars stand in dim repose,
Or steps lead down to hallowed wells,
With alien heart and squeamish nose,
That scorns a hundred holy smells !

Through stifling courts and lanes I creep,
And jostle with dark bodies nude,
Past throngs of worshippers, in deep
Unsympathising solitude.
Stone-carven mystic shapes divine
I view with glances cold and calm :—
The priest steps watchful from the shrine,
And stretches forth a greedy palm.

From right to left, from left to right,
Down many a temple-crowded street,
I cross their thresholds polished bright
By myriad unshod pilgrims' feet.
My careless steps profanely peal,
And wake long-slumbering echoes' tones,
As round about with booted heel
I trample on the sacred stones.

Through Durga's cloistered courts I trip :
From roof and wall with antics droll
A hundred saintly monkeys skip,
To munch the heathen stranger's dole.
Past reverend bulls I wend my way
With flowery garlands round their brows,
That through the city idly stray,
The paradise of apes and cows !

Then down the Ganges' sacred tide,
Where bathers flock at morning hour,
Slow past the swarming bank I glide,
O'erhung by temple, dome, and tower.
They glitter in the sunlit air ;
The gay-clad votaries go and come,
And rises loud from ghaut and stair
Unnumbered voices' mingled hum !

Cross-legged 'neath huge umbrellas' shade
 Sit fee-collecting Brahmans old ;
Shines every little shrine arrayed
 In countless wreaths of marigold.
The funeral pyres that burn the dead
 Blaze lurid in the daylight's glare :—
Sure never traveller's gaze, I said,
 Beheld a scene so strange and fair !

A single mosque amid the crowd
 Of temples fronts the morning sun,
And with sky-pointing turrets proud
 Mutely proclaims that God is one.
Circling I mount the soaring stair ;
 A thousand domes, a maze of street,
A nation's central home of prayer,
 Lie gleaming-white beneath my feet.

Our ancient Western faiths are past ;
 No altars smoke to Jove and Thor ;
But here their idol powers outlast
 The blows of Chance, the shocks of War.
I see thee as thou e'er hast been,
 Thou wondrous city of old time ;
Half hideous in thy rites unclean,
 Half, in thy changeless might, sublime !

ODE TO A CROW.

*Monstrum nulla virtute redemptum
A vitio. — Juvenal.*

‘Caw, caw, caw!’—As you sit
At my open window, not caring a whit
For my ears or my nerves, as who should say,
 ‘Since on my way,
Good sir, your shutter conveniently lay,
I’ll perch upon it, and, ere I quit,
 Just give you a bit
Of my mind,—caw, caw!—a fine day, a fine day!’

You grey-necked impostor, you feathered cheat,
Nodding your head in fashion absurd,
 More imp than bird,
Where are the cates that you stole in the street
From the costerman, as he sauntered along,
 Tray on head, unconscious of wrong?
Where is the biscuit you snatched, as you know,
From baby’s hand not an hour ago,—
From an innocent child, unscrupulous crow?

‘Caw, caw, caw!’ you reply,
With a knowing wink of your reprobate eye;—
Was there ever a crow that was shy?
Tell me again,—that pensive kite
That, quietly whistling, sits aloof
On the sunny corner of yonder roof,
What has *he* done to deserve your spite?
Three or four together, you go
And sidle towards him on tip of toe,
Advancing, hopping,
Fluttering, stopping,
Ready to flee in a moment, I trow,
Should he indignantly turn on the foe.
In the end no doubt you win, and boast
(As down he sails from his vantage-post)
And croak and chuckle; methinks, at most,
But a paltry victory, crow?

‘Caw, caw!’—But there’s worse behind.
What did you do at another time,
You and your fifty companions in crime,
To an owl, a creature of stolid kind,
A poor old moon-face, dazed and blind,
That missed his way home at the close of night,
And at last was surprised by the broad day-light?

You all swooped down on him there, as he sat,
Helpless and mute, on the ground below ;
You gave him a kick and a peck and a blow,
You tore out his feathers, you tumbled him flat,
And pulled him to pieces between you, crow !

‘Caw, caw, caw !’—But if one
Prowl under your roosting trees with a gun,
You are far from thinking *that* fun.
Speedily then your fraternity musters,
Cackles and blusters,
Hopping and flitting and crowding the branches
Angrily flying, or sitting in clusters,
Raining vindictively down avalanches
Of curses on him who would brutally go
To shoot or to threaten an innocent crow !

‘Caw, caw !’—I never saw
Such a pertinacious creature to caw.
Have you a mind to split your jaw,
Or make your throat unpleasantly raw ?
There’s one of your tribe that, day after day,
Close to my window, perched on a bough,
Goes croaking on in an aimless way,
Just for the sake of the noise, or how ?—

And waiting in vain for that crow to hop,
(He croaketh on in a aimless way),
In despair my pen or my book I drop,
And both my ears with my fingers stop ;
(He croaketh on in an aimless way) :
Till, rising at length, I double-bar
My windows against the villanous jar !

‘ Caw ! ’—But this is not all your crime.
You are not content with the daylight time.
But when the moon in her tropic prime
 Shines full and bright,
 At dead of night,
 ’Tis really past joking
 To hear you all croaking
On the trees that sleep in the silver light.
Think of the hours of pleasant rest
You might have enjoyed in your cozy nest.
See how Nature is having her fill
Of repose, and must you be croaking still ?
Shallow-witted, when will you know
That those white beams that rouse you so
Are *not* the grey light of the morning, crow ?

'Caw, caw!'—'Tis seldom, I trow,

(Save when the blast

Of the storm sweeps past,

To shatter your nesting trees and strow

With small black corpses the ground below)

One sees a dead or a dying crow.

Do you retire from human view

To a thicket lone or sequestered glade,

When the strong wings fail and the keen eyes fade,

And you cannot croak as you used to do?

And, your long life over, are you laid

Among the dead leaves in the peepul's shade?

Alas for the carrion race of the crows!

I fear your age has a stormier close.

For when one of your kind grows old and weak,

And is drawing near to his final breath,

Or is crippled of wing or maimed of beak,

I wot his end is not far to seek;

His fellows surround him and peck him to death.

Or should he haply die in his nest,

The dismal truth must be confest:

No mossy leaves his body cover,

Above him no greenwood shadows hover,

His funeral rites are quickly over,

He is eaten up by the rest!

BRAHMOISM.

The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life. — *Byron.*

Webs by Metaphysics spun,
So the workers say, my friend,
Are from nothingness begun,
And in nothingness must end.
What is this thou weavest then,
Babu Keshub Chunder Sen ?

Science all the folly shows
Of the things we hoped before ;
Tells the little that she knows,
Leaves us groping still for more.
Say, hast thou a sharper ken,
Babu Keshub Chunder Sen ?

Fate, a giant, cold and far,
Eyes us with a stony glance ;
Bids us see the things we are,
Tangled in the nets of Chance.
Save us from this prison den,
Babu Keshub Chunder Sen !

Over us, for pity pale,
Angel-like Religion stands ;
Lifts a corner of the veil
With her dim and shadowy hands.
Canst thou do as much for men,
Babu Keshub Chunder Sen ?

Prophets many in the land
Wisest schemes for us would trace ;
Systems written in the sand
Restless tides of Time efface.
Rocky scroll and iron pen
Hast thou, Keshub Chunder Sen ?

Further from the fairest Fair
Men are wandering day by day ;—
Wailing voices in the air,
Lips that move and hands that pray.
Canst thou lead them back agen,
Babu Keshub Chunder Sen ?

Leaving Error's cave behind,
India's new-taught children range ;
Miss Truth's mountain summits, blind
With the mists of Doubt and Change.
Guide them through the cloudy glen,
Babu Keshub Chunder Sen !

Crouching toil-worn at his door,
On the dank and feverish plain,
Yonder ryot, lean and poor,
Moans to cruel gods in vain.
Stretch a hand across the fen,
Save him, Keshub Chunder Sen !

Culture, Morals, Ritual, Creeds
Hither thither jostling run ;
Not till Self, a victim, bleeds,
'Shall the mighty work be done.
That shall be I know not when :—
Know'st thou, Keshub Chunder Sen ?

THE LANDSLIP.

A grave so rough.—Tennyson.

Day after day the weltering storm-clouds grim
Down-streamed, and peaks once rosy with the morn
Upreared all ghostly-veiled in vapours dim
Their giant shapes forlorn.

Pushed by the flood, swift through the misty wreath
The boulders leapt, and like a warning knell,
On the bleared margin of the lake beneath.
The cataracts roaring fell.

Till, seamed and burrowed by those torrents brown,
While ceaseless raindrops every crevice fill,
The mountain heaved ; quick rushed the earth-wave down
One moment, and was still.

Alas ! man's dwellings clothed that treacherous steep ;
Then sank, since vain was human might to save,
Strong men and wives and children, buried deep
In one tremendous grave.

Earth whelmed them far from sun and summer hours ;—
The grassy earth on which their feet had trod ;
And that fair slope their hands had decked with flowers
Now crushed them with its sod.

No churchyard holds their dust : yet Time shall lay
Upon that scarred hillside his smoothing hand ;
While round them watching till the Judgment Day
The silent mountains stand.

THE GORGEOUS EAST.

Thou dost here usurp the name thou owest not.—*Shakspere.*

I.

What is the gorgeous East?—

A land of plenty : well-stocked byre and fold,
Fair flowers and fruits ; a land of wealth untold,
Silver and gems and ivory and gold ?

What is the gorgeous East?—

A land of lotus-flowers and lovers' sighs,
A land of dark and tender-lustrous eyes,
Shining through palm-leaf bowers of Paradise ?

What is the gorgeous East?—

A land of scented gales and murmuring tones
From harp and viol, 'mid the glistening stones
Of marble-vaulted halls and peacock thrones ?

What is the gorgeous East?—

A land of forests lit with struggling gleams,
Of whispering tree-tops weird and hallowed streams,
Of purple sunsets and of golden dreams ?

What is the gorgeous East?—
A land of sculptured fanes and altars dim,
Where white-robed priests, flower-wreathed each swarthy limb,
Chant to their solemn drums the mystic hymn?

A land of gentle toil and homely graces,
Where gay-clad rustics roam through shady places,
A land of simple hearts and happy faces?—
What is the gorgeous East?

II.

This is the gorgeous East :—
A land of jungle wild and feverish fen,
Where clay-built huts of weary toiling men
Stand 'twixt the serpent's lair and tiger's den.

This is the gorgeous East :—
A land of cruel gods whose victims, slain
'Mid rites impure, their tinsel altars stain ;
A land of priests that sell men's souls for gain.

This is the gorgeous East :—

A land of famine ; children's hungry cries,
Peasants' thin cheeks and patient wistful eyes ;
A land of vultures waiting for their prize.

This is the gorgeous East :—

A land where women labour side by side
With labouring men, or where the childish bride
Cowers, the caged plaything of her master's pride.

This is the gorgeous East :—

A land whence usury hath never ceased ;
A land of debt by custom's waste increased ;
Where bankrupt ruin haunts the marriage feast.

A land where Nature's tyrant powers prevail ;
Beneath whose giant hand men's spirits fail,
Smit by her scorching sun and stormy gale :—

This is the gorgeous East.

JACKALS.

A cry of Hell-hounds . . . rung
A hideous peal.—*Milton.*

Hark!—a single resonant note, long-drawn and shrill,
Suddenly wakes and shatters the midnight silence still;
Sadly moaning low, then swelling and rising amain,
It pierces the startled sky, like the wail of a soul in pain.

Then, as it sinks and dies, what horrible echoes rebound!
Listen! the air is alive with a stridulous tempest of sound;
Yappings and whoopings and yelpings, a general jubilant
yell,
Like the shriek of a thousand devils let loose from the
pit of hell.

That was the jackals' cry. For, ever, loud and clear,
First one only the key-note pipes for the rest to hear;
Then, as the pack sweeps by, a chorus of dissonant jars
Peals from a hundred throats, full-mouthed, to the quiet
stars.

Deep is the voice of the frog, as he sings his monotonous
song

Down in the rain-filled pools to his love the whole
night long ;

Harsh is the noise of the pariah dog, as he howls to the
moon,

Barking indignantly back to the echoes that answer his
tune ;—

Strange is the musk-rat's bird-like chirp, as he wanders
at night ;

Sharp is the kite's wild scream, as he stoops from his
airy flight ;

Shrill from the crickets at eve does their deafening music
flow ;

Hoarse is the grating croak of the shameless obstre-
perous crow ;—

Drear's the mosquito's chime, as he winds his small thin
horn,

Nearer and nearer at twilight dim to his victim borne ;

Dread is the tiger's roar, as he hears the elephant's
stamp

Crushing the jungle flat with resistless resolute tramp.

But of all the horrible voices that earth or that sky has
heard,
Uttered, high or low, by insect or beast or bird,
Worst is the jackal's cry, which—hark!—the night-
winds bear,
Storming again with its din through the echoing spaces
of air.

PUNKAH-BEATS.

Undulations to and fro,—*Tennyson.*

I fain would know the plan
Whereby thou soothest thy unceasing toil,
Thy most monotonous moil,
Thou diligent and tireless punkah-man !
Thy heart belike is full
Of loyal service breeding wakeful powers,
That through the midnight hours
Crouching thou still dost crouch, and pulling still
dost pull.

For all unlike thy kind—
Staunch votaries of Morpheus, folk that sit
Wrapt in a slumbering fit—
Art thou, whom Argus, sure, hath taught his sleep-
less mind.

O nodding heads, O hands
That droop so soon and leave your ropes at rest,
Fretting the drowsy breast,
Awake ; for here your great ensample stands !

What rhythmic sense, what flow
Of pendulous motion and harmonious pace
Must in thy soul have place,
To set thine engine pulsing to and fro
With such symmetric charm !
Say, doth some Indian ditty rude and sweet,
With phantom tuneful beat, [tual arm ?
Sing in thine ears the while and prompt thy punc-

How shall I image thee,
O punkah-man ?—as the calm moon that guides
The footsteps of the tides,
The noiseless counter-dances of the sea ?
Or dost thou, faltering never,
Match that great law that governs human fate, •
And makes the world vibrate
To action and reaction, pauseless ever ?

On Saugor's lonely shore,
When down Bengala's bay the storm-winds blow,
Swinging with cadence slow [flakes hoar :
The tall waves break and swift upbound their foam-
Then backward hurrying soon,
Their rhythmic waters slide into the main ;
Yet quick return again :—
So doth thy punkah sway in such alternate tune.

Anon, thy labours done,
Thou wilt return to thine own meadows sweet,
And watch the shadows fleet
Athwart the waving grain, and how the sun
Hath daily death and birth ;—
Wilt mark the throbbing of the midnight star,
Sphere-music hushed and far,
And all the metric motions of the earth.

ODE TO AN ADJUTANT STORK.

Clo. What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wild fowl?

Mal. That the soul of our grandam might haply inhabit a bird.—*Shakspeare.*

Adjutant, thou most absurd
Of all feathered Indian creatures !
With thy quaint and sober features,
Partly man and partly bird
Thou to me dost often seem,
As I fancifully dream
That I see in thee the trace
Of an aged human face,
Shrivelled-brown and furrowed o'er
With the wrinkles of fourscore.
Bald is thy head, thy neck is lean,
Where a few white hairs are seen,
And I have never heard thee speak
Once from thy capacious beak ;
But thou dost keep so calm and still,
Propped upon thy spindle-shanks,
With thy gaunt ungainly bill
Overscored with crooks and cranks

That I muse, as thee I scan,
Thou art some old gentleman,
Sharp of face and bent of back,
In vest of white and coat of black,
Who silently with both his hands
Thrust beneath his coat-tails stands !

Thou art, sure, as fixed and solemn
As St. Simeon on his column ;
Gazing round with eye unerring,
Perched aloft and never stirring,
Save when with that outlandish beak
Thou dost give thy wings a tweak ;
But soon again it sinks to rest
Moveless on thy downy breast.
Or if thou should'st quit thy station,
With such grave deliberation,
In a style so calm and sweet
And with such poise and balance neat
Dost thou lift thy milk-white feet,
That I picture thee the symbol
Of that dignified repose,
Never ungenteelly nimble,
Which, as every body knows,

Marks the manners, vesture, hat
Of the languid aristocrat.
And in thy preposterous face,
As thou standest in thy place
On a house or on a tree,
Adjutant, methinks I see
A smile of grim sarcastic mirth,
As of one of high degree .
Musing on the little worth
Of the foolish things of earth !

What a calm luxurious life
Dost thou live secure from strife !
Wriggling snake or vagrant rat,
Little frog or lifeless cat
Deftly dost thou swallow whole,
Down thy spacious throat they roll,
Proving without doubt or question
How excellent is thy digestion.
Thou may'st wander where thou wilt
Round the houses men have built ;
Where the open casement swings,
Sweeping by on clanging wings ;
Perching on their garden trees,
Or stepping past their doors at ease ;

For full well thou know'st that none
Will threaten thee with stick or gun.
Happy bird ! thy vulgar taste
For carrion and offal waste,
For snake and rat and frog and mouse,
And leavings of the slaughter-house,
Makes our murderous race forbear
Thee and thine to shoot or snare ;
Since we know the cleansing might
Of thy prodigious appetite,
Entomping what might else bequeath
Annoy, or taint the air we breathe.
Fare thee well, old fowl ! and take
My blessing with thee for the sake
Of the pattern thou dost show
To restless kite and chattering crow,
To mynas and to parroquets
With their screams and noisy threats,
Of a carriage calm and mute,
Such as well a bird may suit,
From all boisterous passion free,
And full of sober dignity.

THE NAUTCH GIRL.

The chime of silver bangles and the beat of rose-leaf hands.—*The Indian Song of Songs.*

Swaying slow she quits her station,
All one silken undulation,
Past the rows of swarthy faces, cressets, that line the
walls ;

With a sleek and sliding motion,
Like the glossy swell of ocean,
Like a cataract's water gliding oily-smooth before it falls.

Silvery—golden—gleams and glances,
Dancing with her as she dances,
Flash, like fire-flies, from her jewelled ankle, arm, and
throat, and ear :

Gemmed with light she glisters darkling,
As a dusky billow sparkling,
Sown with phosphorescent lustre in a tropic midnight
clear.

Clasping folds of gauzy vesture,
Float her hands in wavy gesture,
As she winds in snaky wreathings to the droning of the
hymns ;

Till the truth is lost in seeming,
And our spirits fall a dreaming,
'Neath the spell of rhythmic paces and the mist of
woven limbs.

Like the sea-foam's glittering daughter,
Like an image carved of water,
Trembling into hues of opal, darkly flushed with
radiance rare,

There she circled in her splendour,
While a passionate light and tender
Smote upon us from her dark eyes and the ripples of
her hair.

IN MEMORIAM

THE EARL OF MAYO, VICEROY OF INDIA.*

Chant slowly the funeral hymn,
The deep-toned anthem raise ;
For he, the generous of heart and the stately of limb,
Hath not lived out his days ;
Leaving untimely the light of the sun and the sound
of our praise.

A darkness is on the land,
And the voice of mourning is heard
In the city ; he fell death-struck on that Southern strand,
And our hearts within us are stirred,
Waiting in vain for the smile of his eye and the charm
of his word.

A man high-souled was he,
In statecraft firm and in honour true ;
And whatso'er in his mind he thought was right to be,
That he was wise to do ;
For lightly he left not the task that he set his hands unto.

Nor alone at the Council-board
His voice was heard ; but, I ween,
It hath startled the boar in its lair and the tiger hath
answering roared

From beneath its jungle screen :
For he loved the breezy wold and the paths of the forest
green.

The deathful rumour stole
Through palace and cottage door,
And many a swarthy face grew sad at the tidings of dole
That came from that island shore,
Of the genial heart that was cold and the lips that
would smile no more.

The lights are dim o'er his bier,
He is gone, the noble and grand ;
And riderless passes the steed.—But thou, what doest
thou here,

O stealthy and cruel of hand ?
Too well hast thou sharpened the knife for the friend
of thy Northern land.

Chant slowly the funeral hymn,
The deep-toned anthem raise ;
For he, the generous of heart and the stately of limb,
Hath not lived out his days ;
Leaving untimely the light of the sun and the sound of
our praise.

THE KITE'S SONG.

Wanderer of the air.—*Bungay.*

I wheel about in airy rings,
Through azure heights I stray,
And on my broad and lusty wings
The frolic sunbeams play ;
And when the sky is overcast,
And all the heavens are black,
I ride upon the stormy blast,
And skim the driving rack.

I perch upon the houses white
In blazing heats of noon,
And whistle to my partner kite
A melancholy tune ;
And then, before the daylight dies,
We wing it to and fro
Where twilight insects swarming rise,
And catch them as we go.

And in the pleasant winter days
I range the woodland glade
Where human mortals wend their ways
To banquet in the shade ;
I watch the plates upon the grass
With keen and hungry eyes ;—
Then with a sudden swoop I pass,
And snatch the savoury prize !

Of all the birds that haunt these skies
I most abhor the crow :
He steals my meat in shameless wise,
Then croaks with laughter low ;
He gives my resting wings a tweak,
And off he skips again ;
But some time with my hooked beak
I'll cleave him to the brain !

I spy the creatures far below
Upon the earth that crawl,
Full slowly moving to and fro
So puny and so small.
I sail above their heads with glee,
My pinions wide unfurled ;—
Can these poor wingless weaklings be
The masters of the world ?

Thus through the long and changeless years,
Self-centred in my mirth,
Soaring I mark with alien ears
The distant sounds of earth :
The world stretched out beneath my view
I watch with careless eyes,
A speck upon the summer blue,
A spirit of the skies !

*TO A CRICKET.**

Thou art past the tyrant's stroke.—*Shakspeare.*

Why to my chamber did'st thou come
Unbid, adventurous cricket?
'Twere better had'st thou stayed at home
In silvan glade or thicket.

Thou might'st have piped the whole night long
With all thy friends in chorus;
And no one then had blamed thy song,
Or quenched thy voice sonorous.

But Fate that maddens to their fall
Insects as well as mortals,
Drove thee to quit thy leafy hall
And stray within my portals.

And there beside my sleepless bed
Thy deafening notes were ringing.
Frantic I rose with stealthy tread
And tracked thee by thy singing.

With circling lamp, on hands and knees
I groped and peered and pondered :
E'en thus, methinks, Diogenes
In quest of wise man wandered.

As I approached, thy voice—so shrill
It had been heard a mile hence—
Was on a sudden hushed and still
In deep and breathless silence.

So blank a pause from such a peal
My senses half confounded :
So one who sails at sea may feel,
And knows his ship has grounded.

Such lull in Hades Orpheus wrought,
When Love than Death was stronger :—
Lo ! Sisyphus's stone stopped short,
Ixion whirled no longer.

But ah ! 'tis vain thy tune to quell,
I've traced thee ere it ceases ;
Like his who from the steeple fell,
Alas ! thine end was pieces !

Then to my mind did I recall,
 (Would I'd remembered faster !)
That he who slays the cricket small
 Shall scarce escape disaster.

And will henceforth thy tiny shade
 Still haunt my chamber portal,
Thin-voiced Tithonus of the glade,
 In hate at least immortal ?—

And shall I oft at midnight hear
 A phantom treble swelling,
And know that thou, poor ghost, art near
 A fiend to ban my dwelling ? *

No ; thou in some more golden clime
 Methinks, such vengeance scorning,
Repeat'st the glories of thy prime,
 The darling of the Morning !

A HIMALAYAN CEMETERY.

Some day the upper air,
The sun, and all things fair
We reach through the dark soil — *Tollemache*,

If in India I should die,
Far from Britain's islands,
In a churchyard I would lie
Up among the highlands.
I should hear, though I was dead,
Tinklings of the fountains,
Watch the snow flush rosy-red
On the morning mountains.

I should hear the cooling breeze
Whispers round me sending ;
See the yellow-lichened trees
O'er me downward bending ;
Feel the skies, as in a dream,
Fresh and bright above me,
And the happy earth would seem,
Grassy-green, to love me.

Merry bees would hum and fly
Round the churchyard crosses,
By the shady crags that lie
Clothed with dewy mosses ;
While the purple orchids cling,
In their airy tether,
From the boughs where sweet birds sing
Through the sunny weather.

Far above the kites would glide
With a placid motion,
Sailing down the crystal tide
Of the airy ocean ;
And their shadows on the grass
I should mark and number,
As like phantoms they would pass
O'er my dreamy slumber.

When in storms the lightning streak
Tore the clouds asunder,
I should hear from peak to peak
Leap the echoing thunder.
What though heaven its floods should pour
Swept on blasts sonorous ;
Rain would make the torrents roar
In a louder chorus.

And when autumn's twilight gloom
 Veiled the woodland alleys,
Gentle mists would wrap my tomb,
 Stealing o'er the valleys ;
And I should not shrink to know
 Winter there had found me,
Pleased to feel the English snow
 Lightly falling round me.

Far removed from human ills,
 Where is quiet deeper
Than the silence of the hills
 For the tired sleeper ?—
Cradled in a valley bright,
 Lulled by dewy fountains,
While above him, calm and white
 Tower the solemn mountains !

*TO AN ELEPHANT.**

O. it is excellent
To have a giant's strength.—*Shakspeare.*

Snake-handed monster, what a thigh
And what a frame hast thou !
Methinks thou art the progeny
Of some primeval sow,
Whose useful snout did slowly sprout
To such a length as now.

And yet no sow's are thy broad brows,
And like the mighty fin
Of old leviathan, thine ear
Is not to swine's akin ;
Though, when I scan thee in the rear,
Thy tail, like theirs, is thin.

How strange the size of thy small eyes
That should be large as eggs !
Therein thy rig's just like the pig's,
While, thick and round as kegs,
Thy tusks some hoar preglacial boar
Might own,—but not thy legs !

How are *they* dight in pillared might,
Beneath thy bulk outspread !
The sober earth doth reel and dance,
As thou thy massy head
Dost insupportably advance,
With slow and soundless tread !

Where are your Cyclops, Hercules ?—
Gargantua, Atlas, where ?
Old Titan hurling rocks and trees,
Or Brute's gigantic pair ?
Stupendous beast ! not one of these
Can once with thee compare.

Yet toil'st thou, gentle in thy might,
Beneath the howdah's weight ;
Or docile on thy tusks forthright
Dost bear the timber freight,
And stow'st each plank all smooth and tight
With patient strength sedate.

Thou hast so kind and meek a mind
That thou dost e'en allow
Weak man astride thy neck to ride,
Content thy force to bow ;
Who oft, alack, with wilful whack
Doth score that lordly brow.

O great and wise ! alas, thy size
My loving ardour crosses ;
Too vast thy waist to be embraced,
Thou amiable colossus !
So with a squeeze I'll gently seize
And shake thy soft proboscis !

THE DAWK BUNGALOW.

(A Silhouette.)

I.

Four white-washed walls, a roof of thatch ;
Below, a canvas ceiling spread ;—
It undulates beneath the tread
Of rats that scamper, squeal, and scratch,
A floor where ragged mat-canes sprawl ;
A crazy table and a bed ;
A tattered punkah overhead ;
And in the room's exterior wall
A hole with neck of bottle lined ;
For punkah-rope, an iron rod ;
A man without to pull and nod ;
A din, the soul to tear and grind.

2.

A hen disporting in the yard ;
Pursuit and flight and capture ; then
For breakfast, tiffin, dinner,—hen :
Its fate and fibres both were hard !

Belike an omelet, wherein
A verdant vein of garlic gleams ;
The salmon of our English streams
Exhumed from its embalming tin.

The iron forks of elder time ;
For bread, chupatties flat and round ;
A table-cloth with years embrowned ;
Sauces and pickles of the prime.

3.

Night brooding o'er a swampy plain ;
A stifling calm ; a noise of frogs ;
The echoing bark of pariah dogs ;
Then sleep descending on the brain,

Amid the fumes that insects raise,
By hundreds made the night-lamp's spoil ;
They choke its little sea of oil,
They fry and crackle in the blaze.

Ere dawn, the stir of travelling car ;
The matin flutter of the breeze ;
And lo, between the whispering trees
The glittering of the morning star !

THE SONG OF DEATH.

Let us hob-and-nob with Death !— *Tennyson.*

My fellow-exiles, fill your glasses,
We'll sing one song before we die :
The tiger in the jungle grasses
Has sucked the peasant's life-blood dry ;
Forth from his hole the cobra creeping
Steals slow across the cottage floor
To where yon weary mother's sleeping ;—
Methinks her babe will wake no more.

Mark how the cyclone's wave, high-towering,
Comes inland bounding from the sea ;
Sweeps far and wide the hamlets scouring,
And drowns their folk with stormy glee.
There Famine grīn, with giant paces,
Stalks o'er the rice-fields parched and brown,
Grins at the crowd of piteous faces,
And strikes its starving thousands down !

What doughty bands of fell diseases
Come flying on the summer's breath !
See each its struggling victim seizes,
And whirls him down the Dance of Death.
Through peopled towns the foul winds sighing,
Where Cholera glides, that shape of dread,
Are filled with murmurs of the dying,
Or voices weeping o'er the dead.

Death ! back from thy dark portals render
The friend we loved, the comrade dear,
Who yesterday, in health's young splendour,
Joined in our gay and social cheer.
One day we heard his careless laughter,
Unconscious of his Indian doom ;
The next, his corse we followed after,
And laid him in his sudden tomb.

India, thy sun with fiery glances
Has laid full many a Briton low ;
Thy Juggernaut of Death advances,
Girt with all spectral forms of woe.
Accept this earnest of our duty,
Thy slaves, and not thy sons, are we ;
Thou grave of England's strength and beauty,
Hear how we sing to Death and thee !

Methinks I see a ghostly legion
Of women weak and children small,
Doomed in thy strange and sultry region,
Like withered flowers, to fade and fall.
Ah! in far years shall cruel slaughter
Glut here her ire, as once of yore?
Shall these broad streams and wells' still water
Be dyed with English blood once more?

My fellow-exiles, men before us
Have learnt that life's an empty breath;
Come, raise we then one gallant chorus,
And pledge a glass to gloomy Death.
-Away! too sad the notes are ringing,
No more shall themes like these be mine;
This is no song for festal singing,
Dash down the cup and spill the wine!



TO A FIRE-FLY.

Souls made of fire. — *Young.*

When the day has sunk to sleep,
And the star-fires, one by one,
Out into the darkness creep,
Then, O stranger to the sun,
Comest thou with tiny brand
Skimming o'er the silent land.

From the cavern of thy hiding
Lo, the twilight dusk and brown
Brings thee, tipt with splendour, sliding
Like a little meteor down !
Dancing, glancing, here and there,
Through the warm and stagnant air.

With what joy, as daylight dies,
Dost thou break thy prison-bars,
Circling through the darkening skies
Underneath thy kindred stars ;
Publishing to this dull earth
All the passion of thy mirth !

From the land of salamanders
Then, methinks, to men below
Thy embodied spirit wanders
With thy native fires aglow ;
Winged gem of faery light,
Dainty Ariel of the night !

Or art thou some roving spark
Planets in their fierce careers,
Spinning through the central dark,
Scatter from their wheeling spheres ;
Where their orbs a light enshrine
Tremulous and pure as thine ?

Whencesoc'er that wondrous ray,
Airy visitant, mine eye
Loves to mark thee flit and play,
In my chamber soaring high ;
Kissing in thy wayward flight
Every beam with breathing light.

For in thee I picture oft
Floating down the languid even
Gleam of love and pity soft
From the far and shining heaven ;
Like some note that earthward flies
From the starry harmonies.

*THE MEMORIAL WELL & GARDENS, CAWNPORE.**

These are they which came out of great tribulation,—*Revelation.*

Speak gently, gently tread,
And breathe one sigh profound ;
In memory of the dead
Each spot is holy ground.

Theirs was no common doom,
And some were young to die ;
Within this narrow tomb
Women and infants lie.

They drank the bitter cup
Of fear and anguish deep,
Ere they were rendered up
To death's unruffled sleep.

Meek be our sorrow here,
For them we could not save ;
And soft be Pity's tear
Above the children's grave.

Quenched here be passion's heat,
Left strife and vengeance cease ;
Within their garden sweet
Leave them to rest in peace.

For Nature hath made clean
This place of human guilt ;
And now the turf is green
Where English blood was spilt.

Earth's healing hand hath spread
Her flowers about their tomb ;
Around the quiet dead
Trees wave and roses bloom.

Then lift not wrathful hands,
But pass in silence by ;
Their carven angel stands
And watches where they lie.

*TO M. E. A., ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF HER
BIRTHDAY.*

Heaven lies about us in our infancy !—*Wordsworth.*

Maud, lady Maud, is one year old,
Maud so round and so fair to see ;
Maud is merry and bold, so I am told,
And blithe in the hills laughs she.
And his festal strains Love sends from the plains,
A note of glad forewarning ;
And a song to greet, in her cloud-nest sweet,
Our Maud on her birthday morning.

The mountains shall blush with a sunrise flush,
On this day of all the week ;
And the silent snows shall be red as the rose—
As the rose that blooms on her cheek !
While the clouds in the valleys, like sheep in green
alleys,
Come trooping up to see
Our maiden tender, our 'Maud in her splendour,'
For to-day a year old is she.

And the sparkling rills drop down from the hills

And the peaks that are muffled in snow,

And are come to greet with their music sweet

Merry mistress Maud below.

And the breeze above whispers words of love

Through the trees in the woodland shady ;

And 'neath sunlight glancing the shadows are dancing

In honour of our little lady.

And aloft is heard the glad note of the bird,

And beneath the cicadas are shrill,

As they cheerily pass through the glistening grass,

On the sunlit side of the hill.

And the squirrel darts swift to his hole in the rift

Of the dark boughs overhead,

Where the orchid's cluster of glorious lustre

Is trailing in azure and red.

For 'tis Nature's mind that such welcome kind

To the soft child-flower should be given ;

Nay, let me be dumb, for has she not come

But one year from the nurseries of heaven !

Yet shall echoes sweet her calm years greet

From these murmurous woods and fountains ;

And a light shall shine on her life's decline

From these vales and these snow-clad mountains !

ALBUM VERSES.

Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain.—Shakspeare.

When heat is roasting us alive,
 (Thermometers at ninety-five)
 E'en with thee, lady, for a hero,
 My hopes of pleasing fall to zero.
 But ah! 'tis vain to plead excuses,
 Men have their fates and pens their uses,
 And mine it is to take the latter,
 Collect ideas begun to scatter,
 And versify (a thought how horrid!)
 In Zone that's fitly classed as Torrid!
 But who can conquer fate or ladies?
 Then come (sore needed here your aid is),
 Ye Muses nine,
 And, Bearer mine,
 Divest me straight of coat and collar,
 And come thou nigh, O punkah-wallah;
 In yon verandah take thy status,
 And pour upon me such afflatus
 As represents the combination
 Of coolness and of inspiration.

'Tis much, I grant you, in the tropics
To write without a want of topics ;
Which, when thy charms enlist my verses,
Are plentiful as—empty purses.
These then that lie, like pearls of beauty,
Locked in the casket of my duty,
(And fairer gems were never set
Within a rajah's carcanet)
How easy were't to string together,
If only it were cooler weather !
But ah ! my fervour, as I find,
Is not of the poetic kind ;
And all the beads for my collation,
Alas, are beads of perspiration !
For now is near the mid-day hour,
An Indian sun asserts its power,
And heats more stifling still remind me
My punkah-wallah nods behind me ;
And cease, lost in the conflagration,
At once both air and inspiration.

*THE LAND O' CHUPATTIES.**The Bengali is the Scotchman of India.*

Ye winsome wilds o' jungle grand,
 Ye bonnie flats o' auld Bengal,
 Where rivers wind aboot the land,
 Amang the flow'rin rigs¹ o' dahl ;
 What though thy clime be unco warm,
 I need na wear but ane sma' dhotic ;
 And gin the rain should droun my farm,
 I paddle in a wee bit boatie.
 Their siller some may dearest ca',
 And some say this or that is ;
 But thee I lo'e the best o' a',
 Thou land o' braw chupatties !

Then hame at eve I gang and eat
 The rice my wife ha' boiled for me ;
 I bang her weel and gar her greet,²
 Gin she has na cooked it daintilie.
 O' bangles ae she lo'es the sicht,
 (Hech hey ! I doot but she's a gawkie³)
 But how to mix my curry richt
 She kens na mair than just a hawkie.⁴
 Their wife some etc.

¹ fields.² make her weep.³ fool.⁴ cow.

My bairns they gie me mickle dule,¹
They fain would live like babus a' ;
And gin I bid them gang to schule,
They rin to mango tope awa.
On charpoys lang the sluggards lie,
And tak na tent² to mind their daddie ;
They winna help to drive the kye,
And I maun hoe my lane³ the paddie.
Their bairnies some etc.

But, spite of a', 'tis unco grand,
Whan I ha' scrapit clean the dish,
To think, my hookah i' my hand,
How fu' I am o' rice and fish.
'Tis canty⁴ i' the gloamin still,
While tomtoms sound their merry note a',
To sing, and whan I'm hoarse, to fill
Frae neighbourin tank the brimmin lotah !
Wife, siller, bairns some dearest ca',
And some say this or that is ;
But thee I lo'e the best o' a',
Thou land o' braw chupatties !

sorrow.² heed.³ alone by myself.⁴ cheerful.

GRASS-WIDOWS.

Fie, fie, how wayward is this foolish love!—Shakspere.

O love, I trow most cool do blow

These northern airs from their cloudy nest :

Lightly, lightly they come and go,

Filling my cheeks with a rosy glow,

As across the vales and the hills they flow

From their snowy cave on the mountain's crest.

How can love in the plains be sweet,

Stifled and scorched by the fierce May heat ?

However divine, fair Love must pine

In a tropic summer for me and you :

Beneath the broad stare of the sun-god's glare

What can poor fluttering Cupid do ?

Then bid me not stay, but let me away

Where the snow-peaks cluster against the blue !

How can love in the plains be sweet,

Stifled and scorched by the fierce May heat ?

So, dear, goodbye ; you, Love, and I
 Shall meet all three when the year is old ;
And while the December breezes sigh,
Forget the summer months gone by
You spent in the plains all parched and dry,
 And I on the brow of the mountain cold.
Choked with the dust and scorched with the heat,
How can love in the plains be sweet ?

THE PARSEE HAT.

'Tis a subject for the world to lay apart their particular functions
and wonder at.—*Shakspeare.*

There's nothing (that's flat)
More startling and strange to look at
Than a Parsee gentleman's hat.

If I told you its shape,
You'd listen with mouth wide agape.

'Tis glossy and starchy,
Like a helmet of papier-mache ;
Has a hole in its crown,
For the genial breeze to blow down ;
And as for its brim,
Why, it hasn't a vestige of rim.

I trow 'if you ever should hap
In the highway to clap
Your eyes on a hat that was framed
In the wonderful style I have named,
So smooth and so wanting in nap,
On the head of idolatrous chap ;—
' 'Tis the queerest invention,' you'd say,
' Since the day
' Eve gave her old bonnets away,
' Or Adam first purchased a cap.'

Now there's one
Thing of all others under the sun
I most wish to do or see done.

And that
Is to sit on this singular hat,
And make it exceedingly flat.

For it rouses my hate,
'Tis so shiny and stiff and sedate,
As it stands, like an emblem of Fate,
Disgustingly straight,
On that heathenish gentleman's pate.
And hence I would make it as flat
As a pancake, or mat.

THE ISLES OF THE BLEST.

(A reminiscence of a voyage through the Straits of Malacca.)

Fairy-clustered isles that lie
Floating in an amber sea,
Underneath the western sky,
Where the sun dies royally ;
Like the great Egyptian queen,
Clothed in gold and purple sheen.

Round about those hundred isles
Clear and bright the waters run,
Flashing into rosy smiles
Underneath the morning sun ;
When, enthroned, he once again
Spreads his sceptre o'er the main.

Ships at anchor in the bay
Slowly swing with dreamy motion,
All whose pictured shadows stray
Down the lucid depths of ocean.
Faint and far, the cataract's roar
Chimeth softly from the shore.

Poised above the palm-trees tall,
Silent stars will glitter soon,
And through feathery leaves will fall
Arrowy splendours of the moon ;
Dian's silver shafts that skim
Soundless through the forest dim.

Languor-smitten, Venus' dove
Here would fold its wings and rest ;
Every little wingéd Love
Build himself a rose-leaf nest :
Such a murmurous lullaby
Rocks to sleep the earth and sky.

BABY'S GRAVE.

O floweret of the milder West,
 That faded ere 'twas noon!
 O budgerling of our far-off nest,
 Why did'st thou fly so soon?

A merry child he was, as near
 To two years old as may be ;
 Death snatched him then, so young, so dear :—
 Here lies what once was Baby.

He laughed the parroquets to spy,
 And would with crows be joking ;
 And *cāwa* he would often cry,
 To imitate their croaking.

Flowers too he loved, and noting it
 Our Malli brought him posies ;
 And at the table he would sit
 All pranked with ferns and roses.

And since that birds and flowers were dear
To him ere life was over,
Flowers grow above his grave, and near
Birds hourly flit and hover.

We are in England now, and he
'Neath India's soil is sleeping ;
But flowers and birds are there, and we
Have left him in their keeping.

WHITE ANTS.

I will go darkly to work.—*Shakspeare*

There is a little crawling creature
Of ashy hue, which like, in feature,
A stumpy worm is.
'White ant' do people call the same ;
But incorrectly, for its name
Is really *Termes*.

It dwells aloof from light and air,
And works its deeds of darkness there.
In hiding meanly ;
And if it wants abroad to go,
It bores a gallery, and below
It walks serenely.

The beams of houses it bereaves
Of all their inner parts, and leaves
A shell fallacious ;
And harmless books upon their shelves
Right through and through it mines and delves
With maw voracious.

Such are the common working things ;
But others grow two pairs of wings
And quit their covers :
And these at twilight you may spy,
As from their nests aloft they fly,
Aerial lovers !

But O ! alack and welladay !
Fell Murder marks them for his prey,
And waits to meet them,
In shape of greedy kite and crow,
Which, flitting wide-mouthed to and fro,
By thousands eat them.

A few that from their foes escape,
Assuming then a wingless shape,
Down tumble straightway :
The little workers watch beneath,
And bear them nestwards in their teeth,
And close the gateway.

Then—sight of horror and surprise !—
These ladies grow a monstrous size,
Your thumb's not bigger ;
And the industrious creatures lay
Full eighty thousand eggs a day,
A decent figure !

This for a year they do, still shut
Close underground, since first they cut
Those airy capers ;
And then they die, no doubt at last
Worn out with filling up so fast
Their Census papers !

CHURCH-GOING.

He wears his faith but as the fashion of his hat.—*Shakspeare.*

How fine it is to sit in churches,
And gaze about from floor to ceiling ;
While to and fro the punkah lurches,
And cools excessive warmth of feeling.

How sweet to find a vacant sitting,
Nor have to waste rupees upon it ;
Where I can pray in comfort fitting,
And keep in view the casual bonnet.

Some prayers are longer than I'd plan them,
But still I say the 'people's' clauses ;
And then I sit and hear the anthem,
Quite sorry when the organ pauses.

I'm not a clever critic creature,
To judge about a pulpit diction ;
I nod approval to the preacher,
But more from dozing than conviction.

'Tis well for parsons from their perches
The 'World' to censure in a sermon ;
But which the World and which the Church is,
Is what I never could determine.

I never fast, I eat my dinners
On Fridays just the same as Mondays ;
But still I'm not among the sinners
That never go to church on Sundays.

The brains for understanding Science
I don't desire, and never had 'em ;
I don't believe in that alliance
Between the monkey tribe and Adam

Why should you get into a fever,
On Balaam's ass or the Creation ?
You're sure to turn an unbeliever,
And p'raps be cut by half the Station.

If suns stand still; do you stand still too ;
And Jonah's whale forbear to fish up.
Such points if he has not the skill to
Solve, what's the object of a bishop?

To do as others do my view is ;
I hate your Shelleys and your Byrons :
The law of Darwin's I pursue is
To suit myself to my environs.

One thing I'll mention, and I class it
As chief among my few objections :—
That velvet bag (I always pass it)
In which they weekly make collections.

And if, to balk this pert utensil,
You sit an empty purseless hearer,
They hand you round a card and pencil,
Which only makes your cost the dearer.

There seems to be no reason vital
Such charges should at church betide me :
I pay my taxes ; in requital,
Religion's by the State supplied me.

I would not seem to argue pertly,
And *sapienti verbum satis* :—
But who would pay (to put it curtly)
For what he has a right to gratis ?

Hence I have heard from some reporter,
That folk, in righteous indignation,
Present, from corks for soda-water,
The round tin tops as their donation.

And if at times we must be giving
To organs or memorial windows,
Why pay for men who earn their living
By making Christians out of Hindus?

A Christian Bearer's mostly vicious ;
And caste itself is sometimes handy ;
For when 'tis lost, I grow suspicious
He 'll drown his sorrows in my brandy.

In missions, there, to my belief, are
Few really good and useful features ;
Their own religion seems to me far
The best for these poor heathen creatures.

'Tis very well to speak in figures
Of Natives being brother Aryans ;
I call all coloured nations ' niggers,'
Just as the Greeks called theirs barbarians

And when you've proved their faith a fable,
They must be fed by you, their pastors :—
'Tis easy work to push a table,
When you've provided it with castors.

For loss of caste is loss of diet ;
'Tis like the Polynesian *tabu* :
You may convert the starving ryot,
But not the plump and wealthy babu.

But hark ! the service now is closing ;
Out file the choir in state surprising ;
But though yon crosier looks imposing,
I fail to see the need of rising.

If in the band (then more attractive)
A bishop marched, I shouldn't wonder.
If up I got with movement active,
But I'll stand up for nothing under.

And then, as with my fellow-mortals
I saunter forth, we take our station
In groups within the lobby portals,
And ease our minds with conversation.

'Tis well while syces are completing
The lighting of each buggy candle,
To have a place of friendly meeting,
And talk about the latest scandal.

And if the Church by me were guided,
I'd have a care, in spite of croakers,
That in the vestry were provided
A few cheroots for pious smokers.

Then off we drive, our buggies reaching ;
The mob of worshippers grows thinner :
At any rate with prayers and preaching
I've got an appetite for dinner.

And then the recollection's pleasant,
While I enjoy my salmi'd pigeon,
That at the service I've been present,
And duly countenanced religion.

*ROUND TABLES.**

(The lay of an Indian bachelor.)

At good king Arthur's ancient court
Round tables were in fashion,
And no one for precedence fought,
Or flew into a passion.
Who should sit here, or who sit there,
Was never once the question ;
They sat—it did'nt matter where,
And had a good digestion.

Or if the fashionable shape
Were with three equal angles,
You then as safely might escape
These inconvenient wrangles.
But now there's not a house without
An oblong table (rot 'em !),
Which has two sides to fight about,
As well as top and bottom !

At one end, should you wedded be,
Your wife a seat may find, sir ;
But what, of bachelors like me
Must be the state of mind, sir ?
Can I, as I arrange my delf,
My indignation smother ?
For if I take one end myself,
Pray who's to take the other ?

We drink confusion in the grape
To him who first delighted
In tables of an oblong shape,
Whereby our joys are blighted.
Would that, with so perverse a brain,
He'd never known a father !
And so heaven send us back again
The tables of king Arthur !

THE SUNFLOWER.

Sunny as her skies. — Byron.

Come, choose me a flower from the garden bower
The stateliest flower that grows ;—
True, delicate-white is the lily so bright,
And blooming-sweet is the rose.
But not for them is my song's sweet tune :
Rose and lily, lily and rose,
I know another flower that blows
Queen-flower of the summer noon.

Soft and frail are the charms that are pale
In the lily and red in the rose ;
In the sunflower's face a bolder grace
And a prouder beauty glows.
O sunflower, thine is my song's sweet tune :
Rose and lily, lily and rose,
I know another flower that blows
Queen-flower of the summer noon.

Thou turn'st to the sun, as the bright hours run—
To the sun thou lovest best ;
And glancing down, like a golden crown,
His glory doth on thee rest.
O sunflower, thine is my song's sweet tune :
Rose and lily, lily and rose,
I know another flower that blows
Queen-flower of the summer noon.

O maiden rare !—dark eyes, dark hair !
My sunflower is like unto thee :
Thy face is bright with the passionate light
Of a beauty as wild and free.
O maiden, thine is my song's sweet tune :
Rose and lily, lily and rose,
I know another flower that blows
Queen-flower of the summer noon !

AFTER SERVICE.

In death still lovely. — Young.

The choir are gone ; the organ pealing
No more responds to foot and finger ;
Void is the church from floor to ceiling,
And I am last of those that linger.

A purple radiance is investing
Each pillar in the sun's declension ;
And the long lines of punkahs resting
Stand fixed, like soldiers at attention.

No loitering groups the porch encumber ;
Wheels stir no more the churchyard gravel ;
About me broods a deathlike slumber,
As down the lonely aisle I travel.

And there behind my fellows waiting,
I scan the fate of Britons cherished
By many a carven slab, narrating
How slain by treacherous hands they perished.

Bright o'er these stones the sunlight flashes ;
But by rude shocks their lives were shattered.
Their names alone are here, their ashes
Wide o'er a stranger soil are scattered.

A tear for these shall England render :—
O patient warriors, bravely dying
So far from hands and voices tender,
In timeless graves so lonely lying !

To duty true they fell ; death's pallor
In them conveys a noble teaching :
I think, as I depart, their valour
More eloquent than any preaching.

*THE LAY OF THE PARIAH DOG.**

Houseless heads and unfed sides.—*Shakspeare.*

I am the dog that pariah hight :
Through road and lane I prow! by night ;
By day I sprawl in dust and sunshine ;
And lean am I, for my meals are light.

I am not handsome, swift, or strong ;
My tail is thin, my muzzle long ;
In hue my hide is tawny yellow ;
My ears up-sprout like a double-prong.

Alive I keep ; why ask me how ?
Each street hath offal heaps enow ;
And, jackal-left, the rural pickings
Are sweet at times of a lifeless cow.

For home or master have I none,
A loafer dog beneath the sun.
My coat, alack, is wondrous mangy,
And you may number my ribs each one.

The shrill-tongued jackal's yelping call
Sounds in my ears most musical :

I sit and hark beneath the starlight,
And howl back lusty replies to all.

When on my kind I vent my spite,
I snarl and growl with all my might ;—

I snarl and growl, but oh ! I never
Have had the will or the heart to fight.

I hate the moon when shines her rim
Full-orbed, she looks so sleek and prim ;
And staring down fat-faced and chubby,
She mocks my meagre and starveling trim.

So at her then in threatening tones
I bark all night, and shake my bones.
'Tis droll to mark the human creatures
That try to still me with sticks and stones.

I know, O men so good and wise,
The villain gleam that haunts my eyes ;
But then ye have not borne, my masters,
Cain's brand through tropical centuries !

And sometimes in the burning Spring
My severed head its price will bring ;—
O sordid wretch, that steal'st behind me,
And wield'st thy cudgel with deadly swing !

Thyself an outcast, canst thou still
Thy brother outcast hunt and kill ;
And serve, for lust of paltry lucre,
Our common tyrant's truculent will ?

O royal Yudhishtira's hound,
That once of old so faithful found
Thy generous lord did'st heavenward follow,
How all in vain is thy worth renowned !

O dog beloved, lo ! here am I,
That might have learned a faith as high,
Doomed in thy land half-starved to wander
With none to care if I live or die !

*THE ALLIGATOR.**

'Tis sweet to know there is an eye will mark
Our coming, and look brighter when we come.—*Byron.*

Behold the broad-nosed alligator lie
On a warm bank beside the Ganges' shore.
He knows that his digestion's all awry
With rings and bangles swallowed by the score
Yet landward still he cocks his wicked eye,
If he may spy one tender woman more.
Alack, that in this age of moral gravity
There should be found such Saurian depravity!

Stone-still he sprawleth, and his face and chin,
In all their simpering length, appear to us
The embodiment of one perpetual grin,
The mien of Momus or a Cheshire puss.
He seems to mock his victims and their kin
By always smirking like Democritus.
With that corrupt propensity to bite us,
'Twere fitter that he copied Heraclitus.

O alligator, listen, and I wish

You'd *weigh* my words,—you have a many *scales* ;
Why won't you learn to be content with fish,
That wear no brazen trinkets round their tails?
Even a maid is scarce a dainty dish,

When wreathed in ornaments as hard as nails.
For Hindu ladies (as your state discloses)
Hang pounds of brass on ankles, arms, and noses.

'Tis true that fishes have a predilection—

Particularly *Hilsa* fish—for bones.
(But that can hardly be a grave objection
For one that such a spacious gullet owns.
Besides, in bones there's marrow, a collection
Not found in brass or gold or precious stones.)
Their smallness too one's indignation rouses;
Tubslis especially—in boarding-houses.

But *quantity* may easily provide

For what in *size* is wanting to your taste :
Your vasty jaws you need but open wide,
And little fishes unawares will haste,
Pushed by your circling tail, to run inside ;
Snap-to your chops, you have them safe encased.
Then swallow them at ease, and muse in quiet
How pious 'tis to follow Lenten diet.

I've heard that crocodiles shed tears, but then
Their sins may well awaken their contrition ;
Surely for them an easy virtue, when
Its practice does not lead to inanition.
So weep and dine on fish and weep agen ;
Like Pistol, mingling grief and deglutition.
Though *blubber* I have always thought a greater
Mark of a whale than of an alligator !

Monster, adieu ! be careful of your liver ;
And may my lay, with more than Orpheus' art,
Move you to leave our girls by tank and river
To fill their lotahs and in peace depart.
Or — if I needs must make you shake and shiver
By horrid threats—remember this, and start :
If you persist in conduct so improper,
Bangles in future can be made of *copper* !

SONG.

Fill your glasses, my friends, and a fig for the fates !
On Bacchus contentment and cheerfulness waits :
And the simpkin we quaff in Bengal I've a notion
Is only the better for crossing the ocean.

Don't talk of old England in patriot vein,
I'm sick of its clouds and its fogs and its rain ;
For a climate that's cheerful, not fickle and drear,
Give *me* the clear sky that shines over us here !

That the weather in summer is sultry I know,
But a well-handled punkah will give you a blow ;
And if in the Rains it is steamy, remember
How charming a season succeeds in November.

In England you boast that, though sometimes it
pours,
The weather need never keep people indoors ;
But little I envy you Britisher folks,
Who spend most of your lives 'neath umbrellas
and cloaks !

You may brag of your sport, but pray isn't it true
That your only wild boar is shut up in the Zoo?
And as for your hares and your foxes, I find
A good honest tiger is more to my mind.

In your routs and your balls you may take a delight,
In your club-rooms by day, and your concerts by
night;
But where are your canters o'er meadow and lawn,
When the peepuls are whispering their joys to the
dawn?

And then how delightful to sit at your ease
In a spacious verandah and feel the south breeze,
Involved in the fragrance tobacco can shed,
And with no fear of catching a cold in your head!

Let the Soot be as proud of his land as he lists;
I have tasted her cakes, and—been soaked by her
mists.

But if you would tempt me with dainties to cram,
Set me down to the mutton that's fed upon *gram*.

Think too of the servants that here we possess:
A butler to feed you, a valet to dress;
A porter to guard you, a coachman to drive,
And a wallah to fan you and keep you alive;—

A groom for your horse, and a nurse for your son,
A messenger swift on your errands to run ;
A gardener, a cook, and a man with a broom,
To look after your dogs and to sweep out your room.

In England what troubles from servants arise !
Since your language they know, at your board
they are spies ;
With their sour British humour that ever repines,
And no caste to prevent them from drinking your
wines.

Then here's to the land of the peg and the pipe,
Of moonlight and mangoes, siestas and snipe ;
Its mornings of sunshine, its evenings of calm ;—
Here's a health to the home of the lotus and palm !

RHYMES OF THE 'P. & O.'

Breathings of the sea. — *Tennyson*.

THE RETURN TO INDIA.

Come back, come back, across the flying foam,
We hear faint far-off voices call us home.—*Clough.*

She sits upon the deck at even,
As fades the sun's autumnal ray ;
She thinks not of the purple heaven,
But of a summer passed away ;
When through sweet English woods she went,
Farewells and partings half forgot,
And with three little children bent
To pluck the blue forget-me-not.

She seeks her husband o'er the sea :
He too is dear ; the East is bright
With the same Love that, roaming free,
Hath touched the West with tender light.
Yet by what loss may gains be won !—
Too hard she deems an Indian lot :
Alone three little children run
To pluck the blue forget-me-not.

The music strikes ; and voices say,
 'Come sing us now a merry strain.'
She thrusts her foolish thoughts away ;—
 Why should she live the past again ?
She rose, she joined the crowd and sang ;
 Yet in her dreams that night, I wot,
Three little children laughing sprang
 To pluck the blue forget-me-not.



THE LAY OF SEA-SICKNESS.

Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground. — *Shakespeare.*

They lie upon benches and chairs,
With looks the horizon that scan ;
The ship gives a lurch unawares,—
And how frail is the stomach of man !
Goodbye to the pipe and the can,
Goodbye to the spoon and the plate ;
Their cheeks and their noses are wan,
And the scent of a dinner they hate.

The children are gloomy and glum,
And the deck is as still as a stone ;
The voice of the singer is dumb,
The piano is silent and lone.
The captain is flippant of tone,
And jests at humanity's woe ;
The maid and the mistress are one,
Such misery levels, I trow.

Their wishes regretfully range
To the fixtures of house and of tree ;
While they think how erratic and strange
Are the ways of a vessel at sea !
There are waves that come under her lee,
There are waves that go over her bow ;
Now pitching, now rolling is she,
Now moving they cannot tell how !

'Tis said these importunate qualms
Much good to the sufferer do ;
But give me a season of calms
On the Mediterranean blue.
Then tell me no more of her hue,
Of the piping of breezes that blow ;
I haven't a wish to be you,
Ye Nereids, Tritons, and Co. !

FLIRTATION.

The bee of hearts, whom mortals name
Cupid, Love, and Fie for shame.—*Beddoes.*

On board of a P. & O. ship,
Where everyone's idle,
Some flirt, just to lighten the trip,
Now and then with results that are bridal :
There are ebbings and flowings of love, which, like
ocean it sails on, is tidal.

How dull would these voyages be,
How empty of marrow,
Were it not so agreeable to see
The dartings of Cupid's small arrow
Mid the lads and the lasses together all cooped in one
quarter-deck narrow !

Alas for the lesson they teach
Of promises slighted
To mistresses now out of reach,
To Indian lovers unsighted ;
Oh the laughter that puckers Jove's face at the vows
that so lately were plighted !

Beware, O ye maidens, of chess ;

'Tis a game to be hated.

'Checkmate to one player ?'—ah yes !

But the issue remains to be stated ;

Which only too often is this—that *both* of the players are
mated.

Don't sit too in corners on ropes

In negligent fashion ;

Don't lean o'er the ship's side, in hopes

Of seeing the sparkles that flash on

The ocean at eve ; such positions encourage a tender
passion.

Avoid the ship's officers ever ;

They are dangerous, off duty.

Beware of the Doctor's endeavour

To make Art a handmaid to Beauty ;

Don't trust his professional squeeze ; think of Cæsar and
his *Et tu, Brute !*

And e'en to the Captain don't, please,

Pay too much devotion :

You may find those snug afternoon teas

In his cabin a kind of love-potion.

His ship is his mistress, so leave him to squire her o'er
the ocean.

Don't visit the 'bridge' on the ground,
However veracious,
Of watching the moon rise ; 'tis found
Diana's a maiden fallacious :
The time isn't safe, and the place is hardly sufficiently
spacious.

But 'What shall we do?' should you plead,
How vain the enquiry,
With rows of ship novels to read,
To write, long arrears of your diary !
Better always be eating and drinking and sleeping, like
monks in a priory !

Why is it that Love on a ship
Will flutter his pinions ?
What business has Venus to skip
And gambol on Neptune's dominions ?
The elegant lady—the underling ayah—they all are her
minions !

Yet how dull would these voyages be,
How empty of marrow,
Were it not so agreeable to see
The dartings of Cupid's small arrow
'Mid the men and the maidens together all cooped in one
quarter-deck narrow !

THE SIDI.

A weed of glorious feature.—Wordsworth.

Afloat upon the ocean foam

He and his friends have wandered far,
Since first they left their sunny home

In distant wilds of Zanzibar.

Mid Red Sea heat and burning wind

He feeds the furnace fires below,
A wight of salamander kind,
Who cares not how they scorch and glow.

Smooth-shaven from the barber's hands,

Save where the pruning razor's whim
Has spared a single tuft, he stands

With strength in every moulded limb.

His dark frame takes a dingier hue

From coaly dust and engine oil ;
His wants are, like his garments, few,
His life—to eat, to sleep, to toil.

Yet is he full of heartiest glee :

There seems to sparkle in his eye
The laughter of the summer sea,
The freedom of the cloudless sky ;
And from his grimy haunts below
At times a merry echoing peal,
Born of a jest we may not know,
Tells of the mirth his heart can feel.

For music to the songs he sings,
An ancient biscuit-box he takes,
And bamboo slips, in place of strings,
Of varying tuneful length he makes ;
These to their sounding chest he fits,
And strikes their tips with swarthy thumb,
Contented on the boiler sits,
And swells their notes with droning hum.

And when at last death comes, his friends
Will dance and chant a mournful stave,
The while his silent corse descends
Far down beneath the moonlit wave.
We know not where his bones are laid ;
But in some corner of the deep,
His weary debt of labour paid,
He sleeps at length a dreamless sleep.

*THE CAPTAIN.**

*From time to time, like pilgrims, here and there
Crossing the waters.— Wordsworth.*

Captain! it is a name of strength,
For 'tis his attribute to wear
A coat of awe-inspiring length,
With golden braid and buttons fair.
On board his nod the vessel shakes,
Our human frailties all he drops,
And when at meals he pepper takes,
Respectfully the punkah stops.

More monarch he of all he sees
Than Crusoe or the Russian Czar,
He drives his ship before the breeze
As though 'twere his triumphal car.
Praise floweth from the lips of all
At ancient jokes he loves to crack ;
And if there be who dare to call
Him 'skipper,' 'tis behind his back.

His life doth ring its changes so,
As fitful winds his sails that fill,
Made up of journeys to and fro,
Of meetings and of partings still.
His world's a show that knows no stay,
Whose motions Time and Fortune check ;
The human puppets pass and play
Before him on his stage, the deck.

But when, another voyage done,
The fleeting masquerade is o'er,
Home's genuine joys are scarce begun,
Ere they must all be left once more.
His children play about his knees ;—
But soon, too soon, their voices sweet
Are drowned in roaring of the seas
And hurrying tramp of sailor feet.

But when we sail by dangerous shoals
Or rocks that lurk beneath the deep,
And he, more skilled, our course controls,
And half the night awake must keep ;—
Day's noises cease the calm to break,
And those recurrent bells that sound
The watches, only seem to make
The midnight stillness more profound ;—

The sea with joy heaven's light receives,
And with her stars its waters paves ;
And 'neath his feet the good ship cleaves
With darkling prow the glittering waves ;—
Ah ! then methinks each childish face
Across the glancing ripple flies,
And in one star he loves to trace
The sweetness of their mother's eyes !

So 'mid the night's illumined calm
A steady bliss his heart has won ;
From sea and sky he draws a balm
To soothe the ills he may not shun.
And lo ! upon the eastern marge,
While dim in flight the planets wheel,
Up leaps the new sun, red and large,
And bathes with light the plunging keel !

THE AYAH'S RETURN.

(Ballad.)

She is leaving bleak England behind,
The land of the mist and the snow,
For a country that's more to her mind,
With perennial summer aglow.
Then what though the wild breezes blow ;
They are bearing her over the foam
To the clime where the lotuses grow,
To the palms and the sunlight of home.

To smile she is ever inclined,
For her temper is merry, I trow ;
Her arm all with bangles is lined,
And she wears a brass ring on her toe.
Her mistress is sea-sick below,
And on deck with the baby she'll come,
While her fancies contentedly flow
To the palms and the sunlight of home.

Betimes in the morning you'll find
Her abroad with her infant in tow ;
At peace with the whole of mankind,
And crooning her melodies low.
For rupees she has many to show,
Her lure on these travels to roam ;
But now 'tis more pleasant to go
To the palms and the sunlight of home.

Envoy.

Ayah, this much of wisdom you know,
Untaught by philosopher's tome :
How sweet to be voyaging so
To the palms and the sunlight of home.

L' ENFANT TERRIBLE.

Mischief, thou art afoot.—Shakspeare.

In this worst of all horrible ships
Eighty children are sailing ;
And a Babel resounds from their lips
Of laughter and wailing.

O the strife and the noise and the rush,
O the tears and the clatter !
To think of the corns that they crush,
Of the nerves that they shatter !

How I long for that golden prime
Of tempestuous weather,
When we all had a peaceable time
Of illness together !

When a sweet hush reigned over all,
And those youngsters were too sick
To strum the piano, or call
For infantile music !

When neither the two-penny horn
Nor tin trumpet had spoken ;
When our coat-tails subsisted untorn,
Our deck-chairs unbroken !

Men thought they had found out a balm ;—
They discovered their blunder ;
'Twas only a tropical calm
Preceding the thunder !

Those children got rapidly well,
In spite of the billows ;
They rolled and they sprawled pell-mell,
And made hay of their pillows !

They did just as they were inclined,
Those irreverent friskers ;
They clawed at your hair from behind,
From in front at your whiskers !

O the strife and the noise and the rush,
O the tears and the clatter !
To think of the corns that they crush,
Of the nerves that they shatter !

I'm taking a prejudiced view,
From the tone of my verses,
You think?—Ask their mothers, pray do,
Ask their ayahs and nurses.

Some are tied by their waists to the mast,
Like heathen ascetics,
For fear they be overboard cast,
While engaged in athletics.

Some watch you at chess or at whist,
Till their ardour increases,
And they count up your tricks, or insist
On arranging your pieces.

Your meerschaum or novel, I pray,
Leave not where they caper ;
The one is but friable clay,
The other but paper !

Should in sleep half their morning be spent,
Keep your joy in restriction ;
You are purchasing present content
With future affliction.

For soon in your berth all the night
Their cries you will number ;
Or they 'll wake up before it is light
And scatter your slumber.

Locked up let the dinner-bell find
Your cabin's attraction ;
Remember those children have dined
And are ready for action !

And as the day closes, beware,
In the dusk of the twilight,
Of falling asleep in your chair,
Or atop of the skylight.

Do you think they 'll respect, in their zeal,
Your defenceless condition,
Or, seeing your innocence, feel
One grain of contrition ?

Ah no ! in the puerile pate
Such a thought never lingers ;
They hold you delivered by fate
As a prey to their fingers !

And if of the maidens there's one
With whom you've a notion
Of whisp'ring apart, when the moon
Is rising o'er ocean ;

O then most of all, if you're wise,
Remember, betwixt ye,
That on board there are juvenile eyes
One hundred and sixty !

FRENCH FORMS OF VERSE.

As a bird's quick song runs round, and the hearts in us hear
Pause answer to pause, and again the same strain caught,
So moves the device.—*Swinburne*.

*THE TAJ MAHAL AND THE RANGOON PAGODA.**

(Rondel.)

A silver dome and a dome of gold,
Beneath the sun and the moonbeams white !
One fair by day, and one fair by night,
A glow and a lustre not to be told !
Which is the fairer who shall unfold ?
Surely both are a glorious sight,
A silver dome and a dome of gold,
Beneath the sun and the moonbeams white.

Instinct with radiance pale and cold,
Or purple-flushed with splendour bright,
They stand, twin visions of delight,
Like those that men in dreams behold—
A silver dome and a dome of gold,
Beneath the sun and the moonbeams white !

*THE VERANDAH.**(Triolet.)*

'Tis a dangerous place,
A dim-lighted verandah.
When a maid's in the case,
'Tis a dangerous place.
It mellows her grace,
So that few can withstand her ;
'Tis a dangerous place,
A dim-lighted verandah !

THE BURRA MEM.

(Rondeau.)

The *Burra Mem*, that lady great,
The Judge's or Collector's mate,
Gracious to some, to others stiff,
Throned goddess of the humble *griff*,
The Station's queen, she holds her state.

Ye juniors' wives, your pride abate !
Your turn will come, so learn to wait ;
Methinks it were not well to tiff

The Burra Mem.

O young Assistant Magistrate !
Desiring not promotion late,
Betimes present, for her to sniff,
Unwearied flattery's fragrant whiff :
You 'll thrive, if you can captivate

The Burra Mem.

*PUNKAH-PULLING.**(Triplet.)*

Alack, he sleepeth all the day,
This punkah-man I hired to pull !
In spite of all that I can say,
Alack, he sleepeth all the day.
On dahl and rice in glutton way
He feeds, and then, when he is full,
Alack, he sleepeth all the day,
This punkah-man I hired to pull !

SUNDUK PHU.

(Rondel.)

Two girlish faces, ruddy as the snows

When Morning climbs their peaks with rosy paces,
By many a pine-clad steep that loves and knows
Two girlish faces,

Gleamed like a vision bright whose winsome traces

No afterblast of winter wind that blows
And autumn's glory from the forest chases,

Shall scatter ; memory lives, if summer goes.

O lone chill mountains and wild woodland places !
A lasting sweetness have ye won from those
Two girlish faces.

*INDIAN BIRDS.**(Villanelle.)*

I hear the cawing of the crows ;
I hear the kite's lugubrious trill :—
Where are the notes fond Memory knows ?

Instead of blackbird in the close,
Or redbreast on the window-sill,
I hear the cawing of the crows.

The shrieking parrot, there he goes !
How harsh the cry from myna's bill !
Where are the notes fond Memory knows ?

Where is the thrush in quickset rows,
The lark above the grassy hill ?
I hear the cawing of the crows.

The screech-owl breaks the eve's repose,
And roving night-jars whistle shrill :—
Where are the notes fond Memory knows ?

Far hence, in gardens of the rose,
The nightingale doth chant her fill.
I hear the cawing of the crows.

Beneath this sun that glares and glows
E'en bulbuls pipe their tunes but ill.
Where are the notes fond Memory knows?

Alas that in this land of prose
The music of the woods is still!
I hear the cawing of the crows ;—
Where are the notes fond Memory knows?

PHILÛT.

(*Ballade.*)

Wandering through the forests of pine,
 Cantering over the frosty ways,
 Where down the rocks in shadow and shine
 The mountain streamlet babbles and plays ;—
 O the fairest of all fair days !
 Ever before us as on we hie,
 By trees or by hill-side framed to our gaze,
 Up rose the white snows in the sunlit sky !

Ranked with these, O sons of the Nine,
 What are the snow-white necks you praise ?
 Where is the draught of the good Rhine wine
 That can match the air of the Himalays ?
 Pan contends for Apollo's bays,
 Tuneful waters to winds reply,
 Where, by cloud unflecked and undimmed by haze,
 Up rose the white snows in the sunlit sky.

Pines that your rugged limbs entwine,
Wilds where never a creature strays,
Birdless forests, your calm divine
Suits you better than woodland lays.
Pixies haply and mountain fays
Peeped unseen from your rifts anigh,
While above, clasped round by the clear broad blaze,
Up rose the white snows in the sunlit sky.

Envoy.

Life, how Time thy sweetness slays !
Wintry winds through the dark woods sigh :
Yet once—though all that is fair decays—
Up rose the white snows in the sunlit sky !

*INDIAN FLOWERS.**(Kyrielle.)*

All round about, in sun and showers,
The Bougainvillia's trailing flowers
Flow purpling over my garden wall ;
But where art thou, my daisy small ?

The gay Poinsettia far displays
Its crimson pomp, whose wondrous blaze
Doth ever the gazer's glance enthrall ;
But where art thou my daisy small ?

There, rosy-red or milky-white,
The scented Oleander bright
Stands up in its beauty, erect and tall ;
But where art thou, my daisy small ?

The Crape-flower rears in August gloom
Its ruddy crest of dimpled bloom,
Though swift the raindrops patter and fall ;
But where art thou, my daisy small ?

Mid mossy branches, whence it sprang,
The wealthy Orchid's clusters hang,
While cicales are piping their madrigal ;
But where art thou, my daisy small ?

The Elephant-creeper, lithe and strong,
All darkly purple winds along ;—
Its giant leaves in the sunlight sprawl ;
But where art thou, my daisy small ?

The Poinciana, feathery fair,
Lightly waves in the summer air
Its tasselled blossoms, as breezes call ;
But where art thou, my daisy small ?

Robed emperor of my garden rows,
The proud Hibiscus flames and glows ;
A flower, I ween, for palace and hall ;
But where art thou, my daisy small ?

Ye gorgeous children of the sun !
Ye tropic blooms ! my song is done.
Clothed in splendour, I praise you all ;
But where art thou, my daisy small ?

*THE BENGALI SHOP-KEEPER.**(Rondeau.)*

This man of wiles, how doth he lie
 In wait for every passer-by !
 As, peering down the long bazar,
 He eyes his quarry from afar,
 And straight his goods begins to cry.
 ' I good thing got, sahib good thing buy ' !
 In vain, half-stunned, you turn to fly ;
 He prances round your hackney-car,
 This man of wiles !

And if at length, his price to try,
 One fourth the sum you offer sly,
 Your self-complacency to mar,
 Quick comes his answer, ' Take it, sar !'
 And then you know you're cheated by
 This man of wiles.

LEAVE.

(Triolet.)

My Bearer for leave did apply,
Because his poor mother was dead.
On the very same grounds last July
My Bearer for leave did apply.
O how can his poor mother die
Twice over ? — yet 'tis as I said ;
My Bearer for leave did apply
Because his poor mother was dead.

Envoy.

My songs are done ; our Indian days
Are lengthening towards the blazing Spring ;
And who can fashion worthy lays
Beneath the punkah's drowsy swing ?

I'll woo no more a wayward rime
In measured sonnets' formal vein :
Nice problems set to tune and time,
That tempt, to flout the toiling brain.

Our years amid these sultry plains,
The palm, the lotus' silver gleam,
Light subjects of my lighter strains,
May seem to some an idle theme.

Yet to men's minds great Nature's powers
A silent inspiration give ;
The fields and sunlight, trees and flowers,
All help to mould the life we live.

And thoughts, of haunting memory born,
A scent—a sound—though fleeting soon,
Stirs, as a sudden breeze of morn
Through peepuls sends a whispering tune.

Then might this random music wake
Perchance some note for tired cars,
To soothe a languid hour, or break
The Indian sameness of the years.

April, 1883.

NOTES.

Page 17. *Some say they forage &c.*—The Calcutta cemeteries have been accredited with being a main source of the supply of flowers that deck the houses of her citizens.

Page 45. *Himalaya's.*—I have given this word its usual English pronunciation, instead of the more strictly correct one of *Himālaya* (*hima*, snow; *alaya*, place), with the accent on the second syllable. In the same way—flying in the face of the Jonesian-Wilsonian-Hunterian system of transliteration—I have written *Cawnpore*, *Lucknow*, *ryot*, &c., instead of *Kānhpur*, *Lakhnau*, *raiya*, it being my object to be intelligible rather than scientific.

Page 46. *The Taj Mahal.*—This magnificent mausoleum of white marble was erected on the banks of the Jumna, at Agra, by the Emperor Sh. h Jehan, in honour of his deceased wife Banu Begum, called *Mumtāz-i-Mahal*, or 'The Exalted one of the Palace.' Its cost has been variously estimated at from two to over four millions pounds sterling, though the labour was all forced, and the 20,000 workmen, who are said to have been employed for seventeen years in its construction, received little else than a daily allowance of corn, and that in scanty measure. 'There was great distress,' writes Mr. H. G. Keene, 'and frightful mortality among them. The poet describes them to have cried out—

Have mercy, God, on our distress,
For we die too with the Princess.'

Page 48. *The Kutub Minar.*—This noble tower, situated about 11 miles from the modern Delhi, is 238 feet high, and slopes upwards from a diameter at the foot of 47 feet 3 inches to one of scarcely 9. It was founded by Kutub-ud-din Aibak, Emperor of Delhi, about the end of the 12th century, and finally completed by the Emperor Firoz Shah about the middle of the 14th. The tower is divided by balconies into five stories, the three lower of which are of red sandstone, and the two higher mainly of white marble.

Page 50. *Slaughter Ghaut, Cawnpore.*—The place of embarkation of the remnant of the Cawnpore garrison after their capitulation. Those who escaped from the blazing boats were shot or sabred by the rebels, with the exception of about 125 women and children, who were led back in custody to Cawnpore, to be afterwards cruelly butchered.

- Page 54.** *The old battered portal towers.*—The *Baillie Guard*, 'so-called from Colonel Baillie, one of the British Residents in the early part of the century, who built it as an approach or defence to the Residency. It is but a simple and commonplace archway, yet one that has undergone almost as much cannonading as many a first-class fortress' (Keene). All the buildings within the Residency enclosure remain in ruins, the sites of the different military posts being marked by small pillars. The whole of the grounds, including the churchyard, is beautifully laid out and carefully tended.
- Page 61.** *The 'Course.'*—The Rotten Row of Calcutta.
- Page 63.** *A shrill 'Good morning.'*—The village children round Calcutta are fond of airing in this way the few words of English they have picked up.
- Page 78.** *Memorials of a glorious fray &c.*—The village of Plassey or Palási was so called from the groves of this beautiful tree (*Bulca frondosa*) that grew in its neighbourhood.
- Page 79.** *Lift their shining sides.*—See Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, CIII. Similarly, a friend points out that 'And beneath me to feel thy muscles of steel' on page 95, seems to echo a line of Longfellow's.—*Pereant qui ante nos &c.!*
- Page 82.** *The Burrisaul Guns.*—These are mysterious noises, resembling loud explosions, heard in the region of Backergunge during the prevalence of the south-west monsoon and rainy season. They remain unexplained, though various suggestions as to their origin have been made. A native legend declares them to be the sound of cannon fired by spirits of the air in honour of Khanja Ali, a local hero.
- Page 97.** *The Palm-tree,—i.e., the Palmyra or Fan Palm (*Borassus flabelliformis*),* which, of all trees, best illustrates Swift's well-known remark—'I shall be like that tree, I shall die at the top.'
- Page 127.** *In Memoriam the Earl of Mayo.*—Lord Mayo was a man of commanding stature and noble presence, and gifted with a charm of look and manner that won all hearts. A keen sportsman, an able statesman, and the genial dispenser of a princely hospitality, never has Viceroy been so much beloved by high and low, European and Native alike. Few that passed through the dimly-lighted chamber where he lay in state, or heard his funeral anthem sung below the steps of Government House, and saw his favourite charger follow its dead master in the sad procession to the ship that was to bear his coffin to England, but felt as if 'with him a friendly presence had been taken away from their lives, leaving them colder and

darker.' He was assassinated by an Afghan fanatic at Port Blair, Andamans, February 8, 1872.

Page 134. *Thin-voiced Tithonus*.—Tithonus, the favourite of Aurora, or the Dawn, and gifted by her with a 'cruel immortality,' which left him to wither in an old age that was endless, was afterwards changed by the pitying goddess into a grasshopper.

Page 138. *Snake-handed*.—The *anguimanus* of Lucretius.

Page 139. *Dost insupportably advance*.—See Milton's *Samson Agonistes*: 'When insupportably his foot advanc't.' Imitated also by Coleridge in his *Ode on France*:—

When, insupportably advancing,
Her arm made mockery of the warrior's tramp.

But Milton himself is indebted to Spenser:—

That when the knight he spide, he gan advance
With huge force and insupportable mayne.

Page 148. *These are they &c.*—This text is carved on the stonework above the gate of the circular open-work screen which surrounds the site of the well. Over the latter there rises a pedestal supporting a statue in white marble—the Angel of Pity. Below is the following inscription:—'Sacred to the perpetual memory of a great company of Christian people, chiefly women and children, who near this spot were cruelly massacred by the followers of the rebel Nana Dhoondoo Punth of Bithoor; and cast, the dying with the dead, into the well below, on the 15th day of July, 1857.'

Page 173. *Round Tables*.—See De Quincey's Works, Vol. I, p. 39.

Page 177. *After Service*.—The walls of most Indian churches are inscribed with memorials to English people murdered in the Mutiny, or to Military Officers and others who have been treacherously killed while on embassy to, or travelling in, some of the savage border States.

Page 181. *My severed head &c.*—When pariah dogs grow too numerous in Indian towns, they are thinned off by the public scavengers, who receive a capitation fee for the business.

O royal Yudhishtira's hound.—In the 17th book of the *Mahābhārata*, Yudhishtira, the Pandu king, declines admission to the heavenly region unless accompanied by the dog that shared his pilgrimage; thus carrying out the ideal of Pope's 'poor Indian,' who

Thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
His faithful dog shall bear him company.

Page 183. *Pounds of brass*.—From 12 to 13 lbs. *Il faut souffrir pour être belle*.

Page 200. *And when at meals &c.,—i.e.,* for fear the action of the punkah should blow a speck of pepper-dust into his eyes.

Page 211. *French Forms of Verse.*—For some interesting remarks on this subject, the reader may be referred to 'A Note on some Foreign Forms of Verse,' by Mr. Austin Dobson, appended to *Latter-day Lyrics*, one of the volumes of The Mayfair Library.

Page 213. *The Rangoon Pagoda.*—This Pagoda, the far-famed 'Shooay-tágon,' is 383 feet high, and is covered with gilt from the base to the summit. The gilding is renewed every eight years at an enormous expense.

Page 220. *Philôt.*—Sunduk Phu and Philôt are the names of two mountains, nearly 12,000 feet high, situated on the road from Darjeeling to the Snowy Range. 'On your right hand,' writes Sir Richard Temple in his most recent work, 'travelling northwards, you overlook the State of Sikkim, which is a labyrinth of hills; and on your left you have in view the valley of Nepaul. On your right front you see the Kanchanjanga, * * and on your left front the famous group of snowy mountains, of which the highest is mount Everest. * * * From that ridge of hills is obtained the finest view of snow mountains in the world.'



GLOSSARY.

Ayah—*Nurse.*

Babu—*Native gentleman.*

Balher—*Barber.*

Bangle—*Bracelet.*

Bearer—*Vallet and Major-domo.*

Bhang—*An intoxicating preparation of Indian hemp.*

Bheesti—*Water-carrier.*

Bowarchi—*Cook.*

Burra-Mem—*Lit. great madam; the wife of the chief official in an Indian Station.*

Charpoy—*Rough bedstead.*

Cheroot—*Cigar.*

Chupatty—*A flat unleavened cake.*

Chuprassi—*Messenger.*

Compound—*The open space or garden attached to a house.*

Dahl—*Pease-porridge.*

Dawk-bungalow—*Staging-house for travellers.*

Dhobi—*Washerman.*

Dhotie—*Waist-cloth.*

Durwan—*Gate-keeper.*

Durzi—*Tailor.*

Eurasian—*One of mixed (European and Asiatic) descent.*

Gharry—*Cab, carriage.*

Ghaut—*Landing-steps of a river or tank.*

Gram—*Corn.*

Griff or Griffin—*One who is fresh out from home; one who has not been a year in India.*

Khansamah—*Butler.*

Kitmutgar—*Table-servant.*

Lotah—*Brass drinking-vessel.*

Maidan—*Grassy plain, park.*

Malli—*Gardener.*

Masalchi—*Scullion.*

Mehter—*Sweeper.*

Memsahib—*Madam, matron.*

Minar—*Tower.*

Missy Baba—*Young lady.*

Mofussil—*Country, rural districts.*

Paddy—*Rice-plant.*

Palki—*Palanquin.*

Peg—*Spirits and soda-water.*

Pin-wallah—*Clear-starcher.*

Punkah—*Fan suspended from the ceiling.*

Purdah—*Curtain covering a doorway.*

Ryot—*Peasant, farmer.*

Sahib—*Sir, master.*

Simpkin—*Champagne.*

Solah—*Pith.*

Station—*European settlement.*

Tiffin—*Lunchcon.*

Tomtom—*Drum.*

Wallah—*Man, person.*

Zemindar—*Landed proprietor.*

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